

TIP TOP WEEKLY

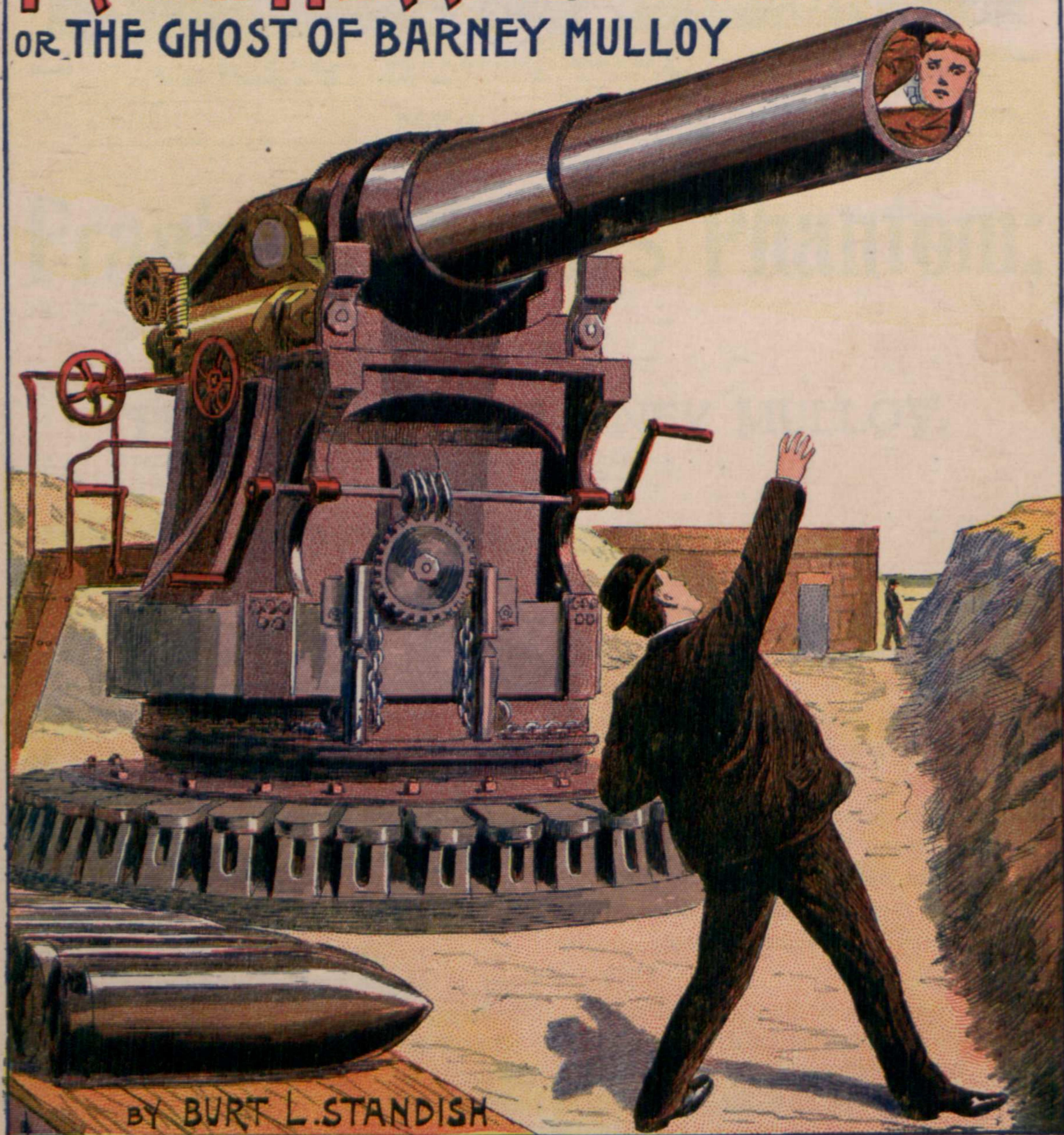
"An ideal publication for the American Youth"

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No. 216.

Price, Five Cents.

FRANK MERRIWELL'S PHANTOM OR THE GHOST OF BARNEY MULLOY



BY BURT L. STANDISH

"DANNY GRISWOLD, THAT GUN IS LOADED AND THEY ARE GOING TO FIRE IT," MERRY CRIED.

THE NORTHERN GAZETTE AND JOURNAL

OF NEW YORK AND THE UNITED STATES.

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NEW YORK, June 2, 1900.

Price Five Cents.

Frank Merriwell's Phantom;

OR,

THE GHOST OF BARNEY MULLOY.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

BAD NEWS.

That was a jolly party aboard the *Merry Seas*, as she bowled along on her way from New Haven to New York. It was composed of Frank Merriwell and a number of his intimate friends; and wherever Frank and his friends were, Dull Care usually hid his agued face and gave place to smiling Pleasure.

"That grumbling old boatman at the New Haven wharf was a liar!" groaned Dismal Jones, as if it were a grief that he had not found the boatman's unpleasant prognostications true.

"What did he say?" asked Danny Griswold, who had been prancing the deck like a diminutive admiral, stopping now and blowing a cloud of cigarette smoke from his nostrils.

"He said that a smoker of cigarettes is always a measley runt!" grunted Bruce Browning, from the big chair in which he had ensconced himself almost as soon as he came aboard, and which he had hardly left since.

"You're another!" said Danny. "He didn't say anything of the kind."

"He was a poet," said Dismal, "and he threw his comment into rhyme. I was

taken in by him, I suppose, because he seemed to be half-way quoting Scripture:

"The Pharisees were hypocrites. And the *Merry Seas* is a ship o' fits!"

"A ship o' fits? Nothing eccentric about this steamer, so far as I can see!"

"Except Danny Griswold!" exclaimed Bink Stubbs. "He is enough to give anything fits."

"Something your tailor is never able to give you!" Danny retorted.

"Sit down!" growled Browning. "You are shutting out the view!"

"What view?" Danny demanded.

"The view of the steamer's funnel. I'd rather look at that. It can smoke and keep still—and you can't."

Inza and Elsie came along, accompanied by Merriwell and Bart Hodge.

Winnie Lee, who was at present under her father's displeasure for her persistence in continuing to encourage Buck Badger, was not aboard, but Amy May was a member of the party. At the moment, she was conversing gayly with Bernard Burrage, Inza's semi-invalid father, on the forward deck.

"We're going to have a fog!" said Merriwell, speaking to Bruce and those near. "I have been hoping it would hold off until we reach New York, but it isn't going to."

"I'd rather be in a ship that has fits now and then than to be stuck in a fog bank!" Bink declared. "I guess that New Haven boatman was a prophet, after all."

The *Merry Seas* was a steamer running on a somewhat irregular schedule to New Haven and New London, and back to the great metropolis by the sea route along the ocean side of Long Island, touching at one or two Long Island points.

Merriwell's friends had decided on a steamer voyage to New York and back as a change from the usual work and athletics at Yale. Not that they were tired of either. But nothing of signal importance was on the programme to detain them in

New Haven, and they were away, therefore, for this short trip by boat.

The ordinary Sound route between New Haven and New York was familiar ground to every member of the party, and something new was desired. Hence they had taken the *Merry Seas*, which had steamed to New London, and out to sea between Block Island and Montauk Point, and had then laid her course down the Long Island coast for New York harbor.

Inza laughed at Bink's lugubrious declaration. Gamp was laughing, too.

"If we get stuck in a fog, we can have Joe Gamp yell a few times for us. That will do for a fog horn."

"Then the *Merry Seas* will have fits sure enough!" said Bink.

Gamp looked serious.

"Well, honest, now, that dud-dud-don't sus-sound so funny to mum-me as it dud-does to you. Owned a cuc-cuc-carf once, that was pup-prancing raound in the medder pup-pup-pasture, and I gug-got so tickled that I just sus-set daown and hollered. Goshfry! you wouldn't believe it, bub-bub-but that cuc-carf fell over dead's a stun wall!"

"Gave it heart disease, of course!" Bink gravely observed. "Not to be wondered at."

"I'm just tut tut-telling this story as a warning tut-to you!" Joe solemnly observed. "The hoss dud-dud-doctor said that the pup-poor thing's head was weak. Sus-so when we get into a fuf-fog and I begug-gin to holler, bub-bub-better pup-put cotton into your ears, Binky!"

Stubbs fell back into Danny's arms.

"Ar-r-r-r!" he gurgled. "I've got 'em now. Fits!"

"I'll give you fits, if you don't stop tumbling over against me!" Danny howled, giving Bink a push that landed him in Browning's lap.

Everybody laughed, and Merriwell and his companions walked on round the steamer's rail.

"It hurts me to think that I must separate soon from all those jolly fellows!" Merry observed, in a saddened voice. "But commencement is rushing this way at railroad speed, and most of them will go out of Yale then forever."

"We'll not get blue about it until we have to," said Elsie, though the thought had saddened her more than once.

"Just see how the fog is coming down!" Inza observed.

"Hello!" cried Hodge, "another vessel!"

A steamer hove into view through the thickening mist.

The boats began to sound their whistles.

"A sort of Flying Dutchman!" remarked Merriwell, and indeed the passing steamer did seem more a phantasm of the fog than a real vessel carrying living, breathing people.

The *Merry Seas* sounded her whistle at frequent intervals as she pushed on into the fog, and for some time after the steamer had vanished her hoarse whistle could also be heard.

"Hello!" cried Browning, who had been lazily looking over some late New York papers.

The tone and the change in his manner told that he had come on a startling piece of news.

"What is it?" Diamond asked.

"Maybe only the same name!" said Browning, and then read this paragraph from the telegraphic columns:

"A young Irishman named Barney Mulloy was attacked and killed by hoboes near Sea Cove, on the coast not far from Sandy Hook, yesterday morning. The object of the tramps was doubtless robbery, as Mulloy is known to have had a considerable sum of money on his person."

Browning looked up questioningly.

"Likely another fellow, though!" he said.

"By Jove! I'm afraid not!" exclaimed Frank, who had hastily taken the paper

from Bruce, and was staring in consternation at the fateful item.

"There may be a hundred Barney Mulloys!" said Rattleton.

Frank shook his head.

"I had a letter from him a few days ago, and he was then stopping at Sea Cove. He was making money, too!"

Merriwell felt stunned. Barney Mulloy had been one of his dearest friends, faithful and honest, kind-hearted and true, jolly and hopeful. Through all of his hilarious experiences at Fardale, Frank had not a stancher adherent. And now Barney was dead, slain by a lot of miserable tramps! Tears of honest grief and indignation came into Frank's eyes.

"Barney Mulloy dead?" exclaimed Inza, coming up at that moment and hearing the news.

"What?" cried Elsie.

"Report in the *Herald*," Frank answered. "Killed yesterday by hoboes, somewhere below Sandy Hook."

Bad news spreads as if by magic. In a little while the other members of the party, having read the story for themselves or heard of it from others, gathered round Merriwell.

"Well, he was an honest boy!" said Hodge, a noticeable tremor in his voice.

"A better-hearted lad never lived!" Merriwell asserted.

Frank's mind went back to Fardale, and, grieved as he was, he could again hear the yells of Barney Mulloy and Hans Dunnerwust, when they crawled into bed with the lobsters, which they thought were centipedes. It had been one of the funniest incidents of the Fardale days, for both thought they were poisoned by the bites of the creatures, and that they would surely die. The whole thing had been a practical joke, in which Frank had played a prominent part. And now Barney, the mischievous, the loyal, the reckless, was dead!

"I can hardly believe it!" Merry de-

clared. "It doesn't seem possible. But there is one thing! I shall spend some money in having those hoboes hunted down and punished for their crime."

"I wish I could have happened along there about the time they jumped on him!" growled Hodge, and the light in his dark face showed that he would have done his best to make it hot for the hoboes if he could have put his hands on them. "Barney had the right kind of stuff in him."

This depressing bit of news took all the merriment and life out of the little party. And, as the steamer wallowed on through the increasing fog, the world seemed suddenly to have become wrapped in gloom.

"Wish we'd stayed in New Haven!" grunted Browning. "I'll have to smoke faster to keep warm or go below."

"And I wish we were in New York," said Bink. "There is something there to warm up the blood."

Danny looked at him.

"Drinks? Likely, the captain has a private bottle tucked away somewhere that he will give you a nip out of."

"Life, I mean! Pulsing streets, swarms of people, theatres, hand organs——"

"Oh, yes, a monkey is usually lost away from a hand organ!"

"I suppose that is why you always seem so lonesome! When Merry is sad, we all are—grumpy! New York would help to lift us out of the dumps."

CHAPTER II.

ADRIFT IN THE ATLANTIC.

"So thick you might cut it with a knife!"

Captain Darien, who had walked forward and joined the group of Merriwell's friends, looked off into the wall of gloom as he said this.

The *Merry Seas* was mournfully blowing her whistle, and others were continu-

ally heard. The steamer was nearing New York harbor.

"Will you try to run in, captain?" Frank asked.

"Oh, I think we can make it. I don't like to anchor out here all night. I have a pretty good idea of just where we are."

"The fog may lift before night."

The captain looked at his watch and saw that it indicated nearly three o'clock.

"I'm afraid not. And likely it will be no better in the morning. I shall try to go in."

A fog siren somewhere on the invisible shore was sending out its unearthly blasts.

Then a whistle seemed to cut the gloom right ahead, and a big black shape loomed through the murk.

The *Merry Seas* sounded her warning, and the helm was jammed hard a-starboard. Another shriek came from the phantom that had seemed to rise right out of the sea. With that shriek, she also swung off.

"I thought we were in for a collision!" said Frank, breathing more freely. "It will be a squeak as it is."

Elsie had nervously clutched him by the arm.

All were moving back from the dangerous vicinity toward the other rail.

"A tug!" said Bart, who was standing near Merriwell.

The tug, which was a large one, seemed now fairly on top of them. In size, it was as large or larger than the *Merry Seas*. A collision of the two vessels would be a serious thing.

"We're going to strike, or scrape!" Frank warned, taking Inza and Elsie each by an arm. "Brace for it!"

Orders were being given, and the whistles were hoarsely blowing. Both vessels were still falling off.

Some one on the tug bellowed frantically through a big trumpet.

"What was that?" Inza asked.

"Tows!" said Frank. "Something about tows!"

The tug and the steamer did not strike, though they grazed each other so closely that a collision seemed unavoidable.

Then there was more bellowing through trumpets and more whistling, and Frank felt the *Merry Seas* tremble under him as her engines were reversed. He knew not what to expect.

Crash!

The big tug, *Gladiator*, had a string of heavily laden barges in tow. Into one of these barges, in spite of every effort to prevent it, the bow of the *Merry Seas* crashed with terrible force.

It was as if a horse should rush headlong against a stone wall.

The shock was terrific. Merriwell heard a sound of smashing timbers and snapping iron. He was pitched violently from his feet as the bow of the *Merry Seas* was forced downward by the collision. He felt himself flying through the air. Then he struck the water, and went down, down, down!

But Frank did not lose consciousness. And as he came to the surface, he supported himself by a gentle motion of his hands and feet, and tried to look about.

He knew how great was his peril. But his thoughts were not wholly of himself. He thought of Inza and Elsie, of Hodge and his other friends. What had befallen them? Had they, too, been hurled into the sea by that awful shock? If so, there could be little doubt that some of them, if not all, would be drowned.

He shouted for assistance, and heard a hoarse whistle not far away. He could see nothing, for the fog was as impenetrable as a blanket. He began to swim toward the sound. He could not tell whether the whistle was that of the tug or the *Merry Seas* or of some other vessel.

Again he sent up a call for help. The water was cold and his clothing heavy. He was thinking of trying to get out of

his shoes and outer coat, when he heard a human cry not far away.

"Help! help!" some one called.

"Help! help!" Frank shouted.

But instead of swimming on, he turned in the direction of the cry. It indicated a human being in distress and peril, and he felt that he might be able to save a life.

"Help!" came the cry again.

The voice was so choked and thick, and there was such a rush of water in his ears that Merry could not tell much about it, yet it seemed familiar. It was near at hand, too; and, sending back an answering call, Frank swam straight toward it.

"Help!" was shouted, right at hand now, for the voice seemed to be drifting toward him.

"Where are you?"

For answer, Merriwell received a heavy blow on the head and breast from a piece of timber. He went under with a cry, his head ringing and his senses reeling.

The next thing he knew he was stretched out on some sort of raft, and some one was holding him there by sheer force. His feet and legs were trailing through the water.

The whistle of the steamer or tug sounded again, but farther away.

"Is that you, Merry? How are you feeling?"

It was a familiar voice, though thick and husky—the voice of Bart Hodge.

It steadied Merriwell's reeling brain. He took hold of the boards and sought to draw himself still higher on them.

"That you, Hodge?"

"Yes. I thought that was you, Merry. How are you?"

"Soaked. But I guess I am all right. Something hit me on the head and shoulders, and I went under. I was swimming this way. Heard somebody call."

"I called, and you were struck by this drift. I heard you and felt the shock when you struck. I reached out and got hold of you—and here you are?"

"Yes, here—and where is that?"

"In the Atlantic, somewhere off New York. I doubt if the captain knew."

"What became of the rest of the crowd?"

"Don't know. That collision threw me clean over the rail. I fell near these boards. I don't know but they came from the barge. When I came up I bumped against them, and then hung on and began to call for help."

There was a moment of silence. Both were listening. Whistles could be heard here and there. Off to the left somewhere they fancied they heard a voice calling, but whether it came from the deck of a vessel or from some unfortunate in the water they could not determine. Near and far the whistles of steamers and tugs were hoarsely bellowing.

"With so many vessels around, we ought to be picked up soon," said Hodge.

"We would be, if any one could see anything. But a boat would have to run right over us to find us. Hark! wasn't that rowlocks?"

Again they listened. The sound of oars was certainly heard.

Clug-clank, clug-clank, clug-clank.

"Let us call together," said Merry. "Now! As loud as you can."

Both shouted with all their might.

For an instant they fancied the boat was coming toward them, and they shouted again. But it was almost impossible to determine the direction of sound. They could not themselves be sure of the direction of the boat. The "clug-clank" grew fainter and fainter.

"We're bound to be picked up soon," Merriwell cheerily declared. "We must be right in the track of vessels. We'd be picked up right away if it wasn't for this beastly fog."

Hodge was silent.

"What do you suppose has become of

the others? They were right with us, you know, when we went over!"

"I'm afraid to think about it," said Frank, with a shudder, which was not caused by the chill of the water.

"I can't help thinking about it!"

"Nor I. But I'm hoping we were the only ones that went overboard. We must try to believe that, Bart, until we cannot believe it any longer."

Hodge was silent.

"And as for ourselves!"

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of ourselves," said Bart. "We can hang on here a good while, I think. I suppose we're being carried out to sea, though!"

"Not much doubt of that, I guess. But we've pulled through worse scrapes together, Bart!"

"That's right, Merry! And we'll pull through this. Are you up high enough on the boards? Let me help you! You can't be feeling very strong after that blow."

Merriwell drew himself higher out of the water, and found that the heavy boards supported his weight.

"If only the fog would clear now! I hear a whistle away off there."

"Do you suppose the *Merry Seas* was sunk?" Hodge asked.

"I shan't think so until I have to. I think the barge got much the worst of it. The steamer seemed to cut it right in two."

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FISHING SLOOP.

"Perhaps we can get up higher on these boards."

"I've been thinking that myself," Hodge answered.

The two friends had locked hands across the narrow space that separated them. Now, by Merriwell first helping Bart and then Bart returning the favor, they managed to get up higher out of the

water, and were gratified to find that the boards were sufficiently buoyant to sustain them.

For fifteen or twenty minutes they had thus drifted on, talking and conjecturing, listening at intervals, and now and then sending up a loud call. The fog siren on the shore was still screeching, and the whistles of vessels were now and then heard. But about them was that impenetrable gray wall of fog.

Having secured an easier position, Frank fumbled with his chilled fingers for his watch, which he finally drew out. It was wet, of course, but to his surprise was still merrily ticking away. By holding it near his eyes the time could be told.

"About a half an hour, I judge, since the collision."

"No more than that? Seems to me it has been a half a day!"

Again there was silence.

"I should think a vessel would anchor, instead of trying to go on in such a fog as this!" Bart snarled.

The memory of the disaster was beginning to make him bitter against the captain.

"They do, usually. The captain thought he could make his way in, that is all!"

"And I'm afraid some of our friends have gone to the bottom as a result of it. We seem in a good way to investigate Davy Jones' locker ourselves!"

"I'm going to believe that our friends are all right. It can't be possible that both the tug and the steamer sank. The tug wasn't really in the collision, you know. She would be able to take off every one from the steamer, no doubt, even if the steamer was so injured that she could not float. The thing I most fear is that some of them may have been hurled overboard, just as we were, and were not lucky enough to find anything to sustain them. But I shall not believe anything of the kind as long as I can hope that it isn't so."

But for Merriwell, Hodge would have been very despondent, especially as the long hours of the afternoon began to wear on and no boat came near them, and their frequent cries seemed to remain unheard; but Frank's hopefulness and cheerful optimism were not without good effect on the mind of his friend, and they were even able at times to talk with some degree of mental comfort.

Frank was sure that they were steadily drifting out to sea. He believed, from the change in the apparent direction of the fog siren that they were moving down the coast toward Sandy Hook. But they were evidently floating farther out to sea, for the sounds of the siren were fainter and farther away.

"I believe the fog is going to lighten."

Merriwell lifted himself and strained his eyes through the gloom. A suggestion of a breeze had fanned him.

"If the wind gets up, the fog may be driven away," he said.

"And the wind will kick up a sea!" suggested Bart.

"But if the fog lifts, we will probably be seen by some vessel!"

There could be no doubt that a gentle breeze was beginning to blow.

"Sure enough, the fog is thinning!" Bart cried, joyfully. "But I don't hear any more whistles."

"Hark! there one sounded."

"Miles away!"

"Wait till the fog rises. Perhaps there are others."

Anxiously they watched the gray wall. The wind died away, and once or twice it seemed that the fog was growing denser, instead of lightening. But by and by the sunlight seemed to permeate it. It appeared to become thinner. Then, like a great curtain uplifted, it for a little while swung upward from the face of the heaving sea.

All around were the green rollers, rising and falling with an oily swell.

Hodge uttered an exclamation of gratification.

"Look!"

Merriwell looked in the direction indicated. Not a fourth of a mile away a dingy fishing sloop was bobbing along, with her dirty mainsail and jib set, yet seeming to catch no breeze.

Both Merry and Hodge forgot their discomfort, forgot their chilled and benumbed condition, and, lifting themselves as high as they could, shouted for assistance.

There must have been some breeze in the dingy sails, for the vessel was moving athwart the line of their progress, and they were being carried along by the tide.

"Shout again!" said Merriwell, and again they lifted their voices together.

In another direction a steamer could be seen, but those on the steamer evidently did not see the sufferers on the raft.

"I don't believe there is a soul on the sloop!" Bart declared, in a despairing way.

"Well, if she keeps on her course, we'll get so near that perhaps we can swim to her and climb on board."

But Bart was wrong. Hardly had he made the declaration when a man appeared on deck, accompanied by a shaggy dog.

Merriwell and Hodge renewed their cries to attract his attention. But the man gave them absolutely no heed. Once they fancied that the dog turned his nose in their direction.

"He don't want to see us," Bart growled. "We are near enough for him to hear! I—"

His sentence was interrupted by a young lady who rushed suddenly on deck from the "cuddy" or cabin. A scream issued from her lips as she appeared, and immediately a second man came into view, from whom she seemed to be fleeing.

"My God! Inza Burrage!"

Merriwell fairly shouted the words.

Inza did not see the raft and her friends. She appeared to see only the shaggy-bearded fellow, who now stood, grimly looking at her.

"She's going to jump overboard!" cried Hodge, so excited that he almost fell off the raft.

Merriwell shouted with all his might.

Inza turned and saw the raft. She uttered another piercing cry, stretched out her hands, and seemed again about to leap into the sea.

Instead of heeding the cry sent up by Merriwell, Inza's pursuer leaped at her to prevent her from jumping over the rail; and, then, bearing her in his strong arms, deliberately carried her back into the cuddy.

Merriwell and Hodge shouted, yelled, screamed.

The one man on the deck paid not the slightest attention to their cries.

"He refuses to hear us!" said Hodge.

The other man appeared, and they called again.

One of the men went to the tiller, and the course of the sloop was changed.

"They are going to pretend that they did not see us," Frank exclaimed.

"Hold to the raft, Hodge! Stay by it!"

"What are you going to do?" Hodge demanded.

"I'm going to swim to that sloop!"

CHAPTER IV.

STRANGE CONDUCT.

"Stay with the raft," Merriwell again commanded.

"But I want to go with you! You will need help!"

"Perhaps I may have to return to the raft. I can't find it if you leave it."

"We can get on that vessel. And you will be killed."

Merriwell was as anxious and almost as much excited, but he kept his head.

"Don't you see that the sloop is mov-

ing on the new tack. She may be going faster than I can swim. Stay on the raft!"

As he gave this last command, he slipped out of his heavy, soaked outer coat, quickly removed his shoes, and, pushing these articles to Hodge, let himself into the sea, and began to swim toward the dingy fishing sloop.

Hodge did not again shout, for he saw that Merriwell's plan was to swim to the sloop, climb aboard of it, and by a sudden attack overwhelm the men.

"He's crazy!" Hodge grated. "They will see him, and they will simply knock him back into the sea. They act as if they were lunatics—or drunk! Why don't they look this way?"

It was indeed singular, but neither of the men seemed to have noticed the raft or heard the cries that came from it.

Merriwell was a splendid swimmer, and in spite of his chilled condition and his hampering clothing he moved through the water almost like a fish.

"Of course I couldn't have kept up with him!" Bart grumbled. "But I could have done my best. He can't overpower both of those men alone."

He held tightly to the shoes and the coat, and looked longingly after the swimmer, turning his eyes often to the sloop, that now, under the influence of a light breeze, was going along in a surprising fashion.

"And how did Inza come to be aboard of that sloop?"

Bart had not time to think of this before, but now the answer came quickly enough. Inza's clothing had clung to her, as she rushed on the deck, showing that her skirts were weighted with water. No doubt, she, too, had been hurled into the sea by the collision of the steamer with the barge, and this fishing boat had in some manner picked her up.

"It's very queer, though, the way that fellow acted! She was afraid of him. But she is below, and he is now on deck.

Likely enough he has her shut up in the cabin."

He beheld Merriwell lift himself slightly out of the water and send out a ringing call. But the men on deck did not stir. And the sloop sailed on.

"The scoundrels!" Bart hissed, through his white teeth. "I should like to knock their heads together. They refuse to hear him. They are carrying Inza away, and they do not intend that any one shall come aboard. And this within the very shadows of New York City!"

The sloop heeled over under the breeze and increased her speed. Merriwell was palpably losing ground.

Bart heard him call again and again, with the same result, and then Bart also lifted his voice.

The result was the same. The sloop moved straight on.

At last he saw Merriwell turn about and swim again toward the raft, when it became evident that he could not overtake the sloop.

"That is enough to kill Merry!" he thought, sympathizingly. "And Inza saw us, too! I wonder what she thinks?"

Slowly and with seeming weariness Merriwell came back toward the raft. Bart lifted himself as high as he could to mark the spot where the raft lay tossing. When lifted on the crest of a wave, Merriwell came plainly in sight; but when either Frank or the raft slipped down the glassy surface of those big green rollers, he seemed to sink into the sea.

"I'm afraid he is going to have a hard pull! He must be tired out."

He shook his fist at the sloop. It was growing smaller and smaller. A haze was again creeping over the sea.

"My God! what if the fog should settle down again and keep Merry from finding the raft?"

Bart shuddered at the thought.

But Merriwell was so strong a swimmer that Bart's hopes rose again almost im-

mediately. There were indications that the fog was once more descending, but Merriwell was now swimming straight toward the raft with a bold, firm stroke and with considerable speed.

"Right here, old man!" Bart encouragingly called.

"I'm coming!" Merriwell shouted, and his tones did not show exhausting fatigue.

Then he swam up to the raft, and Bart helped him to climb upon it.

"What was the matter with those scoundrels?"

"Deaf!"

"What?"

"Deaf as posts, both of them!" Merriwell explained, resting on the boards and panting from his exertions. "They didn't look this way simply because they didn't hear us. I'm sure of that, from the way they acted. I began to think so when I told you to hang to the raft. I believed that if I could overtake the sloop and could climb aboard and make myself known, or knock them down, as my intention was, I could then release Inza and sail the sloop over here and get you. But I couldn't swim fast enough."

"You went through the water like a fish!"

"But the sloop went faster. If that breeze hadn't sprung up I think I could have made it."

"And what are they doing with Inza?"

"I don't know. But I'm glad of one thing. She isn't dead."

"Deaf!" muttered Bart. "Deaf as posts! Well, that does make the thing a bit clearer."

CHAPTER V.

ABOARD THE FISHING SLOOP.

The reaction from the tremendous exertions which Merriwell had put forth made itself felt now. The excitement having passed, he felt almost exhausted. He climbed up as high as he could on the

boards, and Bart, who was terribly benumbed and chilled from long exposure to the cold water, held him thus while he rested.

"It was too much for you, old man!" he said, consolingly.

"I had to try it!" was Merriwell's answer.

"The fog is shutting down again," said Bart.

"But it won't stay down. The sea looked red out toward the west. I think it will clear away to-night."

He was in no mood to say more. And the raft drifted on, while the gray fog settled round them, and its chill and gloominess seemed to go to their very hearts.

But as Merriwell had predicted, the fog lifted again, and at the end of another hour of an experience as terrible as either had ever been called to undergo, the gray bank again swung up toward the sky.

The sun was sinking redly into the sea and night was at hand—and what night might mean in their weakened and chilled condition, adrift on the great ocean toward which they seemed to be so resistlessly borne, they dared not think.

"The sloop!" Bart cried, rousing himself.

Merriwell lifted himself and looked.

It was the sloop sure enough. A little to the southward of east, with its dingy sails furled and their bulging shapes turned to great lumps of gold, with the mast standing out in dark tracery against the red sky line, lay the fishing sloop.

"It's the same!" Merry exclaimed.

"Sure! There can't be any doubt about it."

"And she has cast anchor."

"What does that mean?"

"She is a fishing sloop, and I've an idea we must be on the fishing grounds off the Jersey or New York coast. There is no other explanation. She is out here on a fishing trip."

"And Inza?"

"We'll have to wait for her to clear that mystery away."

"What will we do? If those fellows are deaf, there is no use in shouting."

"We are drifting toward her, you see. We'll be alongside before dark, if this continues."

"Then we'll get on board of her!"

"And we'll find out a few things, if we have to knock those fellows on the head."

The thought was so exhilarating that the warm blood was again driven through their veins, and the numbness seemed in a measure to go out of their chilled bodies. Nothing is so reviving as hope. And hope was theirs again.

The raft drifted so slowly and Bart was so eager that he wanted to leap into the sea and swim to the vessel.

"Let us save our strength," was Merriwell's advice. "We are going straight there. We will probably need all the strength we have."

"I see only one man. He is pottering about near the cabin."

"The other is aboard somewhere. And you noticed that dog? If he puts up a fight, too, I've an idea that he will be worse than either of the men."

The progress of the little raft was tantalizingly slow, but it moved steadily, and after the sun had set and while the darkness was gathering on that great expanse of water, it swung close in under the stern of the sloop. Not a sound was heard aboard of her as she lazily lifted and rolled on the heaving swell.

Frank took his shoes in one hand, but thought it not well to burden himself with the extra coat.

"Now!" he whispered. "Let the raft go. We can cut that boat loose if we have to trust to the sea again. Follow me!"

Then he slipped silently into the sea, Hodge imitating his example. Softly swimming round to the bow, Frank got hold of a chain that ran down from the bowsprit.

"Here," he softly whispered. "Lay hold of this, and come right up after me."

"I'll be there!" Hodge whispered back.

Then, hampered by the shoes, Merry climbed slowly aboard, and Bart swung up after him. Together they dropped to the deck, and crouched low, with the water running in rivulets from their clothing.

Frank felt softly about, and his hands fell on a club-like maul which fishermen use for stunning the large fish they catch. There was nothing else near in the shape of a weapon. He passed the maul to Bart, and clutched one of the shoes as a club in his right hand.

"Good luck!" he softly whispered. "How are you?"

Hodge was chilled to the bone, and his teeth were fairly chattering.

"I'm all right. A bit chilly, but I guess things will be warm enough for me in a few minutes. I'm ready. Go on!"

A dark form was standing beside the cuddy. But for his certainty that the men were deaf or nearly so, Merriwell would not have indulged in even this whispered conversation.

He crept now toward this man, with Hodge crawling at his heels, and when near enough, leaped on the man with a sudden and disconcerting pounce.

Though the surprise must have been great, the man, who was large and strong, wheeled round to resist the attack, and the large dog, which had before been seen, sprang up from the deck and flew at Merriwell's throat.

The ready club in the hands of Bart Hodge tumbled the dog over with a howl, and Merry and the big fisherman began to struggle in the growing darkness for the mastery.

To and fro on the deck they reeled. The dog leaped up again and tried to come to the assistance of its master, but turned upon Hodge when he struck at it again with the maul. Its eyes seemed balls of green fire in the gloom, and the hoarse

growl that came from deep down in its throat was anything but pleasant to hear.

But Bart Hodge met its onset with a stout heart, raining his blows with such swiftness and precision that it dropped to the deck.

Then he hurried to the assistance of Merriwell. But Frank was already the victor. Though the man had the strength of an ox, he had not Merriwell's science and skill in fighting, and Frank had not only knocked the breath out of him, but had hurled him to the deck.

"That rope, Bart! It is right here. I tripped over it. Tie him!"

A cry followed this—a cry from Inza. She rushed out of the cuddy door, and after her sprang a man with a lighted lantern.

Hodge faced toward this man, intending to fell him with the club.

"Frank! Frank!" Inza cried. "I knew you would come, Frank!"

Then she noticed the uplifted club.

"Don't strike him, Bart!"

She threw herself between Hodge and the man with the lantern.

Merriwell was still holding down the man he had conquered.

"What is it?" he questioned, looking up and trying to read Inza's meaning by the light of the lantern.

"The men are deaf!" said Inza. "They rescued me from a piece of boat, to which I clung after the collision."

The man with the lantern seemed about to spring upon Frank in spite of Hodge's threatening club. Inza touched him on the arm.

"Friends!" she screamed, in an endeavor to make him hear.

CHAPTER VI.

INZA'S STORY.

The man did not hear Inza, but he felt the touch, and, turning quickly about, caught something of her meaning in her

manner. The deaf are wonderfully quick in such things.

He made a horrible grimace and pointed at Merriwell.

Again she laid a hand restrainingly on his shoulder.

"Let the man up, Frank," she urged. "The fellows are harmless enough, but they are as deaf as adders!"

"Look out for the dog!" Frank warned.

The dog, which had crawled away in a seemingly dying condition, had struggled again to its feet and appeared to be meditating another attack on Hodge.

"I've got an eye on him," Hodge called back. "Look out for your man!"

Merriwell released the fellow he had overthrown, and the man climbed dazedly and sullenly to his feet.

Inza hurried toward him, shrieking and making motions with her hands. The man did not understand her. It began to seem that both of them contemplated an attack on Bart and Merry.

"Wait a minute!" she cried. "Don't strike them, Frank, Bart, if you can help it!"

"I think I'm awake," growled Hodge, as if he wanted to pinch himself to make sure of it.

The scene was certainly a strange one—as strange as if taken from a comic opera. The fishing schooner rocking on the long swell, the dog cowed and uncertain, one deaf man doubtfully flashing the lantern in the face of Bart Hodge, and the other swaying unsteadily on his feet as if he contemplated making a blind rush at Merriwell.

In less than a minute Inza reappeared from the cuddy. She held in her hand a piece of paper on which she had hastily written some explanatory sentences. This she thrust beneath the nose of the man who held the lantern.

The effect was magical. The lantern came down, something that sounded like an attempt at words gurgled in his throat,

and he made a signal to the other fisherman, whose attitude also changed instantly.

"It's all right now!" Inza laughed, though the laugh sounded a bit hysterical.

"Well, I'm glad that it is!" said Merrifield. "But an explanation would be comfortable."

"These men rescued me from the piece of broken boat to which I was clinging," Inza hastily explained. "I was knocked overboard by the collision. They are fishermen, and are now anchored on their fishing grounds."

"So I see. But what about one of them chasing you, when you ran out of the *cuddy* this afternoon? You tried to jump overboard!"

"The men both thought me deranged by what I had passed through, and I suppose I may have acted strange. I saw you and Bart on the raft, and I tried to make the men see you. But they thought I was going to jump overboard, and I was carried bodily into the *cuddy* and locked in. I didn't know at the time that they could read writing, or I should have tried that; though I was kept locked in the *cuddy* so long that it would have done no good!"

Then she began to motion to the men; and one of the fellows came toward Bart in a sheepish way and held out a hand. Bart hesitated about taking it, fearing a trick; but the man's intentions were honest.

Having made this advance, the way to an understanding was so fully paved that within less than ten minutes thereafter both Frank and Hodge, having wrung out their clothing in a contracted place below deck, were warming themselves and trying to get dry by the *cuddy* stove, while Inza was rattling on with the story of her adventures.

"I really don't know yet whether I am awake or dreaming!" said Bart. "This

about knocks everything I have ever seen!"

"Just fishermen," said Inza. "They would have picked you up, no doubt, if they had seen you—they couldn't hear you; or if I had been able to make them see you. It must have been an hour or more after that when I found that they had writing material in the little desk over there, and I wrote them a note. But the fog was so thick then that it was no use for them to make a search."

"Why didn't they run back to New York with you?"

"Simply because they thought they had done their duty by me, and that it would pay them better to come out to the fishing grounds and take me in on their return. I promised them money, but—"

She laughingly held up a little purse.

"I had just ten cents in that, and you see I couldn't convince them of the fabulous wealth of my father and my friends by exhibiting that. They said they would take me when they went in, and I could not get anything else out of them."

"Perhaps a little money—as much or more than they can make out of this fishing trip—will induce them to take us right in. That is, as soon as the wind rises. We're not only anchored, but we're becalmed now."

Frank was thinking of Elsie and of the others who had been on the *Merry Seas*. His heart was aching with anxiety. Bart and Inza were scarcely less distressed.

The cabin or "*cuddy*," which had been surrendered to them by the fishermen who were now outside, was a diminutive place, smelling unpleasantly of fish and burnt grease. On two sides were bunks. Near the center was the rusty stove about which the three friends were gathered. Its heat caused their wet clothing to emit a cloud of steam. At one side was the writing desk, fashioned by clumsy hands, and scattered about was a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends, consisting of sea

boots and oilskin coats, nets and fishing tackle.

"Not a ladies' parlor," Inza admitted, glancing about. "But I tell you I was glad to get into it."

"And you don't know anything about the people on the *Merry Seas*?" Frank asked.

A look of pain swept across the dark, handsome face.

"Not a thing! I am worried to death about all of them, especially father. But I hope for the best. If any others went overboard, the tug was right there to pick them up, and we can believe, until we know otherwise, that it did. We have been so very fortunate ourselves!"

"More than fortunate!" Merry observed, with a thankful heart. "Now if we can only get to the city without delay! Call in the fishermen and perhaps an offer of money can do something. If not, we can capture the sloop and take it in ourselves!"

"But there is no breeze," Bart reminded.

"That is so. But call in the fishermen. We may get some opinions out of them."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE CUDDY.

Jabez and Peleg Slocum, the deaf-mute owners of the fishing sloop, *Sarah Jane*, of Sea Cove, New Jersey, were what one might call "queer ducks;" a thing not so much to be wondered at when the fact that they had been deaf-and-dumb from infancy is taken into consideration, with the further fact that the greater part of their fifty odd years had been spent in the lonely and precarious calling of Atlantic fishermen. They were rough and gnarled and cross-grained, like the sloop whose deck they trod; yet, in spite of all, like that same sloop, they had some good qualities.

To them fishing was the end and aim

of existence. Hence, as soon as Merriwell, with the aid of pencil and paper, began to talk of being taken straight to New York, the fishermen shook their heads. They had work to do out there on the fishing banks. It was probable they reasoned that it was not their fault that these young people had fallen in their way. They had dutifully rescued them from watery graves—or, in the case of Hodge and Merriwell—had permitted them to rescue themselves. And thus whatever obligation they may have been under as fellow human beings had been fully discharged. They did not want Merriwell's money—and they certainly did not desire to run to New York. It was not their habit to visit New York. Sea Cove was their home, and, whenever they pulled up their rusty anchor for a run from the banks, they returned to Sea Cove invariably, unless blown out of their latitude by a storm, as sometimes happened.

Finally one of them wrote:

"See in morning."

"And now we'll have something to eat!" Inza declared. "Both of you are famished. You are getting thawed out and dry, and if your stomachs are strong enough to stand the odor of things, I'll go ahead and get some supper for you. I know where everything is in the—what do you call it?—locker? Peleg, that's the taller one, showed me."

"Peleg must be sweet on you," remarked Frank, laughing.

She picked up a spider and shook it at him.

"Don't trouble the cook, Mr. Merriwell, if you expect to get anything to eat!"

"I was just going to remark that I admired his taste. He is a man of most excellent judgment!"

"How is your taste, Mr. Hodge?" Inza calmly queried. "Do you think you can eat fish?"

"I could eat a whale. I'll gobble up

this fish basket pretty soon if you don't hurry and serve something."

"Very well. Fish baskets on toast. There are fish in a box back there. And there are crackers in this box. And over there I found some pretty nice canned goods."

Merriwell smiled. Inza's manner was like a break of sunshine.

"Your talk makes me simply ravenous."

That they were ravenous they showed when they fell to on the supper which Inza prepared as best she could from the materials available. There were many things that might have been improved. They might have gone out on the deck, for one thing, but the wet fog had come down again, with a chill that went to the bones—a chill that was simply horrible to Frank and Bart in the damp condition in which their clothing still remained.

The fishermen did not seem to mind the fog, however, but walked the deck and smoked, garbed in oilskins and sou'westers. They talked, too, by signaling to each other with their hands.

Merry, Hodge and Inza sat up until a late hour, going over and over again all the points of the day's experience, with the many conjectures and unanswerable questions which grew out of it.

The fact that the sloop belonged in Sea Cove, the village near which, according to the newspaper report, Barney Mulloy was killed, was a matter of intense interest, even though the fishermen could in no wise enlighten them on the subject of Barney's murder.

Frank continued to hope that a breeze would spring up and that he could induce the Slocums by a liberal money offer to set him and his friends ashore at the nearest point without delay. In the event of a refusal, the temptation to take the vessel in himself would have been strong, but he knew that such a course would hardly do in these modern days. It smacked too much of piracy. Money was the lever he

hoped to use, and when the breeze came he intended to make the lever sufficiently strong to move even these placid souls.

But the breeze did not come. The fog seemed to grow thicker and damper. At length weariness overcame the whole party. Then Inza was left in full possession of the cuddy, while Hodge and Frank crept into a narrow sleeping place forward which Jabez Slocum pointed out to them.

As for the fishermen themselves, they seemed content to stretch out under a tarpaulin on deck; and the *Sarah Jane*, with lights set to show her position, though they could not have been seen a dozen feet distant, rocked sleepily in the fog at the end of her cable.

When morning dawned, the fog rolled away under the influence of a brilliant sun, showing an attractive sight. Other fishing boats, big and little, were rising and falling on the swell. To the northward a steamer, outward bound, trailed from her triple funnels banners of black smoke. From the southward a "fruiter," as the vessels bringing fruit from the West Indies are called, came bravely up the coast. There were other vessels—schooners, barks, sloops, and the coast itself was visible as a blue line.

Finally one of the Slocum brothers came to Merriwell and held out a scrap of paper. Frank glanced at it, and read, in an almost illegible scrawl, "Sea Cove."

"They will take us to Sea Cove!" Inza explained.

"New York city," Merry wrote.

The deaf mute shook his head and again pointed to the name "Sea Cove."

Frank wrote again, making an offer of a liberal sum of money.

The result was the same. The man shook his head and pointed to the written name, "Sea Cove."

"What's the odds?" said Bart. "There is a railway there, and no doubt boats running to New York. And then it will give us an opportunity to investigate the

murder of poor Barney a little. By to-night we can be in New York if all goes well!"

"Put us aboard the fruiter or some steamer," Frank again wrote.

But the man shook his head.

"It is Sea Cove or nothing," said Inza. "And he would be glad, I think, to have it nothing."

"Sea Cove it is, then," Frank agreed.

But the promise was productive of no immediate good. There was no breeze, and, as the *Sarah Jane* was on the shallow banks far out of the route of the steamers, there was nothing to do but to cultivate patience and wait. At Frank's urging, Peleg set a signal from the masthead, but it drew no vessel near them.

The Slocums seemed glad that they were not to be called on to sail at once for land, and they proceeded to get out long hand lines and fish over the sides of the sloop. Wherever they went they were followed by their dog, that limped from the blows Bart had given it. The dog would not make friends with the newcomers, but showed its teeth in a threatening way whenever Bart or Frank came near.

Finally Merriwell and his friends also engaged in the fishing to kill time, and with considerable success. Thus the day wore wearily along until well into the afternoon.

"A breeze!" Frank gleefully exclaimed at last, holding up a hand. "The wind is coming! I feel that if this old boat doesn't get a move on soon, I shall have to jump overboard and swim ashore."

"Well, I should hope you would take me on your back!" Inza observed, her voice thrilled with the thought that the long-expected breeze was actually coming. "I'm as frantic as any one can be to put foot on land and learn what has happened to our friends and to father!"

The Slocums were ready to go home now, and as the breeze rapidly increased in strength and gave evidence of having

come to stay, they speedily got the *Sarah Jane* under way, with the help of Frank and Bart, and stood off for the Jersey shore.

Frank was now perfectly willing that they should run to Sea Cove direct, for a little thought and some questions put to the Slocums had shown him that he could reach New York from there by wire, and by rail from a point near by, and he could take a little time to investigate the Barney Mulloy affair.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GHOST OF BARNEY MULLOY.

"Another calm!" Bart growled, in disgust.

Night was approaching, and the *Sarah Jane* lay becalmed a mile from shore and nearly ten miles from Sea Cove. The shore, high and sandy, was plainly visible, with pretty cottages among some trees a short distance back from the edge of the water. The Slocums had a good glass, which brought all this out with much distinctness.

"If we could just draw the land near enough with that glass to jump ashore!" Inza sighed.

"I've a plan almost as good," said Frank.

This plan was to have the Slocums set them ashore in the dory.

By a little questioning in writing, they learned from the fishermen that the group of cottages was Glen Springs, and that there was a telegraph office there and a daily visit by a small steamer from New York, but no railway.

This increased their anxiety to be set ashore at Glen Springs, for by putting themselves in telegraphic communication with New York they could ascertain without delay the fate of the *Merry Seas* and of her passengers.

For a small financial consideration the Slocums were willing to put Merriwell

and his friends ashore in the dory; which was done by Peleg, who pulled a good strong stroke and sent the clumsy boat through the water at a surprising rate of speed.

"Attack the telegraph office first," Inza suggested.

A telegram to New York brought this answer:

"*Merry Seas* towed in considerably injured. Missing are Frank Merriwell, Bart Hodge, Inza Burrage. Other passengers landed safely. Bernard Burrage at Hotel Imperial."

Bart threw up his cap.

Merriwell was writing another message, directed to Bernard Burrage, assuring him of the safety of Inza and asking that this fact and the fact that he and Bart were also safe be communicated at once to their friends at the hotel and elsewhere.

"That will fix things up all right," he remarked, as the operator began to click off the message. "Of course we can't know all the particulars until later; but it is enough to know that none of our friends are lost, and to be able to let them know that we are all right."

"You bet!" Bart cried. "This is great! I was mighty anxious, I tell you."

"And I was simply crazy!" Inza exclaimed.

The relief to their feelings was so great that the hardships of their recent experience seemed to be at once forgotten, and they became almost happy. They could not be quite happy, for the news of the murder of Barney Mulloy still cast its shadow.

"When does the next boat leave for New York?" Frank asked of the operator.

"To-morrow noon."

"We can drive through to Sea Cove?"

"Yes."

"And when does a train leave Sea Cove?"

"To-morrow at 6:45 and 10:30."

As they were very tired, it was decided,

therefore, that they would remain in Glen Springs until early the next morning, when they would drive to Sea Cove, make inquiries there about Barney, and take the 10:30 train. The hotel at Glen Springs was small, but it looked clean and inviting.

"What do you know about the murder of a young Irishman named Barney Mulloy, by tramps near Sea Cove, day before yesterday?" Merry inquired.

"Only what the papers said," was the operator's answer.

"And no one else in the village can tell us?"

"I think not."

The hotel was in the suburbs, having a view of the sea, and was really a summer hotel more than anything else. It had very few guests as yet.

From it a number of messages were sent to New York and received from there by our friends that evening—messages from Elsie and Mr. Burrage, and from other members of the party that had been on the *Merry Seas*.

Though fairly tired out by his exhausting experiences, from which the long hours on the fishing sloop had not enabled him to recuperate, Frank Merriwell was not able to sleep until a late hour. His thoughts were of Barney Mulloy.

In memory he traveled the round of the Fardale days. The death of Mulloy in that terrible manner had upset him more than he had realized. He had not felt it so much during his exciting experiences, and while weighted down with anxiety concerning the fate of the *Merry Seas*.

"I just can't sleep!" he muttered, seating himself at last by a window and looking out toward the sea, along a greensward on which the moonlight fell lovingly. "Poor Barney! Perhaps I ought to have gone on to Sea Cove and begun my investigations at once. But Inza was so tired. She has held up bravely, dear girl, through it all, but this evening she looked

ready to drop. I felt that we ought not to go on until she was rested. She will sleep well now, since she knows that her father is safe."

Something dark moved among the shadows, and a familiar form approached. Merriwell started up with a low cry:

"Barney Mulloy!"

He saw the young Irishman as plainly as he had ever seen him. The face, though, was white and bloodless. The ghostly figure moved with a heavy step, coming straight up the walk toward the building.

Frank sat rooted to his chair.

In the shadow of the piazza the figure seemed to turn, and was then lost to view.

Merriwell threw up the window.

"Barney!" he softly called. "Barney—Barney Mulloy!"

The only answer that came back was a slow and heavy tread, that seemed to come from a corridor opening out upon the walk along which Barney had come.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The footsteps sounded with great distinctness.

Merriwell threw open the door of his room leading out into this corridor. The light of the lamp flooded the corridor, and he was able to view it from end to end. He could have sworn that the footsteps were just beyond his door. But the corridor was absolutely empty. And the footsteps had ceased.

Frank whistled softly to himself. He was not superstitious, but this was rather shaking to the nerves.

He hurried back to the window and looked out upon the walk and down the moon-lighted sward. No sound came, save the dashing of the surf. He leaped through the open window and proceeded to inspect the grounds in that vicinity. The ghostly form had vanished.

"Hodge!" he called. "Hodge! Come out here."

Hodge, who occupied an adjacent room,

and who had been asleep, threw up a window and looked out.

"Yes," he said. "As soon as I can slip into my clothes. What is it, Merry?"

"I don't know," Frank confessed. "I wish I did know."

"Of course, there are no such things as ghosts," he declared, when Bart joined him. "But if ever a man saw one, I did just now—the ghost of Barney Mulloy!"

Hodge stared at his friend as if wondering if Frank's mind was not affected.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I have said to you. I saw an apparition that resembled Barney Mulloy. And I not only saw it, but I heard it. It came right along here, and turned in there, and then I heard it in the corridor. I threw open the corridor door before any one could have got out of there, and the corridor was empty."

"You must have been dreaming!"

"Not a bit of it, Bart. I hadn't gone to bed. I haven't been even a bit sleepy. I was sitting at my window, and I saw it as plainly as I see you."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

"You certainly must have been dreaming, Merry!" Bart insisted. "Have you looked all about?"

"Everywhere."

Bart walked over to the door which opened from the corridor on the lawn. It was not locked.

"It couldn't have been Barney, of course; but whoever it was went through here into the corridor."

"And how did he get out of the corridor?"

"Walked on through into the office."

"The office is closed. The landlord and all the servants retired along ago."

"Well, it couldn't have been a ghost!"

"I am wondering if it could have been Barney himself?"

"He was—attacked near Sea Cove, not here!"

"I am going to rout out the landlord," Merriwell declared. "Perhaps he can throw some light on the subject."

"He told you, when you inquired, that he had heard nothing except what was in the papers."

"But he may be able to help us to clear away this mystery."

When summoned, the landlord came down into the little office looking very sleepy, very stupid and somewhat angry.

Merriwell told what he had seen and heard, and repeated the newspaper story about the murder of Barney.

"Well, that was at Sea Cove," was the answer. "Ghosts always come back to the place where the person was killed. Why should it come here? I don't like this. If you tell it, it will give my house a bad name. No one wants to board in a haunted house, and it will ruin my summer's business."

"But I thought you might help us to an explanation," Frank insisted.

The sleepy and stupid look had passed away. The landlord had once been a seafaring man, and he was a bit superstitious. Still, he was not willing to acknowledge that Frank had beheld something supernatural. He would not deny its possibility, but repeated over and over his belief that ghosts always return to the place of the murder and to no other place, and that the repetition of the story would drive away his summer boarders.

"I tell him he was just dreaming," said Bart.

"Sure!" with a look of relief. "Of course he was dreaming. There's been nobody in Glen Springs looking like the chap you describe, and I'm sure that nobody has been walking in that corridor, 'less it was burglars."

So Frank went back to his room, accompanied by Bart. He knew that he had not been asleep, though, and he felt sure

that he had really seen and heard something, and was not the victim of a hallucination.

Merriwell sat down again by the open window, and Bart dropped into a chair by his side.

"If the thing comes again, we'll capture it!" said Hodge. "Somebody may be playing ghost, just to scare us. I have heard—"

He did not complete the sentence, for he really heard something at the moment that stilled the words on his lips and drove the blood out of his face.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

The sounds came unmistakably from the corridor.

"There it is again!" Frank exclaimed.

Bart leaped toward the door and quickly threw it open. The lamp light again streamed out into the corridor. But the sounds had ceased, and the corridor was empty.

Hodge stared down the corridor in stupid bewilderment.

"Of all the strange things!" he gasped.

"That is the strangest!" Merriwell added. "You heard it for yourself then!"

Bart walked out into the corridor, peered out of doors through the glass set in the side door, and opened the door leading into the deserted office. There was nothing to be seen.

When he came back his face was beaded with moisture.

"Merry, I wish you'd tell me the meaning of that!"

"I wish you would tell me, Bart! You thought I was dreaming, or fancied that I saw and heard something. You see now that you were mistaken."

"Unless I am dreaming myself!"

"You are perfectly wide awake, Hodge, and so am I! There is a mystery here."

"Never knew anything like it," mopping his face. "Whew! It brings the cold sweat out on me!"

He dropped down into the chair by the window, leaving the corridor door open.

Nothing further was heard.

"Ghosts don't like a bright light!" Merry reminded, smiling grimly.

Bart got up, closed the door, and sat down again.

Then his hair seemed to stand upright on his head. Out of the shadow of the building, near one of the angles, walked the ghostly form which Merriwell had beheld. Hodge was unable to speak at first. Merry noticed his manner and the look in his staring eyes, and sprang to the window.

As he did so, the ghostly form vanished into the shadow, and again those steps were heard in the corridor.

"If Barney is dead, that was his spirit sure enough!" Hodge whispered, in an awed way.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

The steps echoed in the corridor.

Even Merriwell's stout heart was assailed by a feeling that was like superstitious dread.

"It looked just like him!"

"The very picture of him, only white-faced, as if he had just come out of the grave!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! sounded the steps in the corridor.

"Open the door, Merry, for God's sake!" Hodge gasped, as if the words choked him. "See if there isn't something in the corridor! There must be!"

Merriwell stepped to the door and flung it open.

Instantly the sounds ceased.

"Somebody is playing a joke on us, I believe!" Bart declared, and anger came to drive out the superstitious feeling that had shaken him. "I'm going to take a look round the house myself, and if I find anybody——"

"I'll go with you!" Merry exclaimed, and both leaped through the open window.

They circled round the house, looked down the paths and out over the sward on which the moonlight fell, but not a form could they see.

"Give it up!" Hodge admitted. "I don't know what to think."

They came back to the window, and again they heard the footsteps in the corridor.

Hodge went through the window at a flying leap and hurled open the corridor door, only to again find silence and blankness.

"The place is bewitched!" he exclaimed.

"But there are no such things as ghosts!"

"I know it. Of course, there can't be—that's what I have always believed. I have always fancied that stories of ghosts were lies and foolishness, and I'm not ready to back water on that belief. But I can't understand this business."

"Nor I."

"Shall we call the landlord again?"

"What good will it do?"

"Shall we wake Inza?"

"And rob her of her rest and fill her with anxiety? No, let her sleep. She needs it."

"Well, I shall not be able to sleep any more to-night."

"And it looked just like Barney!" Frank declared.

"His very image!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PHANTOM AGAIN.

Both Merriwell and Hodge were so sure they had seen something that they again let themselves out through the window and made a search of the grounds. The result was the same. Not a moving form was to be seen. But as they returned toward the room, they once more heard those mysterious footsteps.

"Stop!"

Frank laid a hand on Bart's arm, and both stood still and listened.

"Where does that seem to be?"

"Merry, that's coming from your room! The thing is in your room!"

Hodge's voice shook, in spite of himself.

Frank dashed toward the open window. But before he could reach it the sounds ceased. When he looked in the room was empty. The light was shining, and the door leading to the corridor was closed.

"No one could have got out of that room without our knowing it!" Merriwell whispered.

Hodge had reached his side, and both were staring into the room.

"Of course not. The thing is impossible."

"And yet those footsteps sounded right here."

"Let's go in and take another look into the corridor."

For answer, Merry drew Bart back into the shadows by the window.

"Keep still right here a little while. Perhaps the—the thing will return. If some one is playing us a trick, we may capture him."

"I shoulld like to lay my hands on the villain!" Bart hissed.

Though they stood there in utter silence for five minutes, the sounds did not come again.

"Of course, there is some rational explanation of this," Merry declared, as they again approached the window. "There must be! It is the wildest nonsense to think otherwise."

"Well, I wish that rational explanation would hurry this way. I'm ready for it, old man! This thing is shaking my nerves all to pieces."

"I didn't know you were troubled with nerves! Nerves are for hysterical girls and old women!"

"Well, I've got 'em now! as the drunk-

en man said when he began to see snakes. I haven't any doubt about it."

Hodge so seldom indulged in a joke that Merry looked surprised. They had re-entered the room, and he glanced at his friend in wonder.

"Likely that—thing will begin to walk again pretty soon," said Frank, after they had remained another minute or so in a listening attitude. "You sit here and watch by this window, while I slip into the corridor."

Hodge obediently dropped into the chair, and Merriwell let himself into the corridor. He closed the door after him, so that if any one approached or entered the corridor that person could not see him, and began his vigil.

The silence was so great that he could hear his watch ticking away in his pocket. It seemed strange that it should run after its salt water ducking, but he reasoned that probably the works were not touched by the salt water. His clothing had dried long ago, but he felt the need of a change. However, he had taken a bath since reaching the hotel, and so was in a measure comfortable.

There was a great deal to think of as he stood there in the gloom, but the minutes dragged along like weeks. This sort of vigil was rather nerve trying. He was sure, now that he had time to think about it, that some very little thing might account for the mystery. He began to think that the footsteps had probably been made by some servant or by a somnambulist. Sounds are very deceptive as to direction, as he more than once had discovered. The footsteps might have been at some distance from the corridor.

"But that doesn't explain what I saw and what Bart saw!" he muttered. "I might have thought my eyes deceived me, but Bart saw it, too. That was either Barney Mulloy, or some one who looks marvelously like him. If it was really Barney, then the poor fellow is not dead!"

I sincerely hope we shall find out that he was not killed. Perhaps the entire newspaper report was based on a mistake. The papers are full of errors."

The sounds did not come again, and when it seemed almost useless to wait longer for them, he returned to the room, where he found Bart watching silently by the window.

"Seen anything?" he asked.

"No. Heard anything?"

"Not a thing."

"I didn't suppose you had, or I should have heard it, too."

"It will probably not re-appear tonight."

"Well, I'm not in love with ghosts, but I have been wild to have the thing pass along that walk again. It wouldn't get away from me this time! I've planned just what to do."

"What?"

"I can reach that walk in three jumps from this window, and it would take a lively ghost to get away from me. I was going right out there the first glimpse I got of it."

"Then you're not afraid of ghosts?" laughed Frank, for there was something amusing in his companion's manner.

"I might be, Merry, if there were any. But I've been thinking as I sat here. I know I saw something, and that something was a man. He didn't look so strong but that I could tumble him over easy enough. That was my plan, and then we could see who it is. It couldn't have been Barney, for all it looked so much like him."

As he spoke he saw the ghostly figure again, but much farther away. Its face was turned toward the window and the moonlight revealed it plainly. It was the face of Barney Mulloy.

Bart went through the open window at a bound.

"Barney!" he called. "Barney Mulloy!"

The mysterious figure drew quickly back into the shrubbery, and disappeared.

Merriwell sprang through the open window after Hodge, and together they raced to the point where the figure had been seen. When they got there they could discover nothing.

"That was Barney Mulloy!" Merriwell asserted.

"Sure!"

"And he isn't dead!"

"Barney or his spirit!"

"It was Barney."

"Why didn't he stop when I called to him?"

"I don't know. There is a mystery here."

"Biggest one I ever struck, Merry! It knocks me silly."

CHAPTER XI.

MERRIWELL'S FRIENDS.

The time was well on toward morning before Merriwell and Hodge turned in to try to get some sleep. No more mysterious sounds or ghostly appearances had been heard or seen.

The sun was scarcely up when they were aroused by a trampling of feet and the sounds of well-known voices in the corridor. A rap fell on Merry's door.

"Arise, ye sleepers, and wake—I mean awake, ye sleepers, and rise!" shouted Harry Rattleton.

"Come out here and let me pull you out of bed!" grunted Bruce Browning.

"He is sleeping like the sleeper in the sleeper which runs over the sleeper and does not awaken the sleeper in the sleeper which—"

"You give us that sleepy feeling yourself, Danny!" Bink Stubbs grumbled.

Merry tumbled out of bed, unlocked the door and thrust his head into the corridor. Before him were Bruce and Diamond, Rattleton and Dismal Jones, Bink and Danny, and through the half-open door leading into the office he also caught a glimpse of Elsie Bellwood and Bernard Burrage.

"Glad to see you!" he cried. "Where did you tumble from?"

Bart had his door open now and began to ask questions.

"I'll be out in a minute," Frank promised, and began to dress with the speed of a lightning change artist.

A little later Merriwell's entire party gathered in the hotel office, for Inza had been awakened and joined them.

Mutual explanations flew thick and fast. Merriwell's friends, after being taken

to New York, had shortly fallen in with a party of Yale students, mostly seniors, who had come down from New Haven on the steamer *Richard Peck*, and were on their way to view the new Government fortifications at Sandy Hook, by special permission of General Merritt, commander of the Department of the East.

This permission had been obtained by Lieutenant Andrew Bell, of the First United States Artillery, who had recently been detailed by the Secretary of War as professor of military science in Yale College.

Merriwell's friends had been invited to join this company of students, that they might the more quickly reach their friends, and had been brought to Sandy Hook by the government steamer, *General Meigs*. From Sandy Hook the steamer's large steam launch had hurried them on to Glen Springs.

"And now you are going right back with us to Sandy Hook!" Elsie enthusiastically exclaimed.

Suddenly a silence fell on the jolly party, occasioned by the shadow that came over the face of Frank Merriwell.

"I can't go until we have settled the mystery of Barney Mulloy," he declared, and then gave a hurried account of what he and Bart had seen and heard.

"I hoped you wouldn't say nothin' about that!" grumbled the landlord, who had been until then an interested listener.

Up to that moment he had seemed pleased, though nervous, for it gratified him to have guests who were of sufficient importance to be brought to Glen Springs by the launch of a government steamer.

"This must be all nonsense, you know!" he declared. "And I can't have any such reports go out about my house. If it gits the reputation of being ha'nted, then good-by business. I won't have a guest set foot in the doorway all summer. I know these people who claim not to be superstitious. They ain't superstitious so long as other people sees things, but they git confoundedly so soon's they begin to see things themselves."

"You have seen things at sea that puzzled you?" Merry asked, knowing that he was making a center shot.

"Who said that I'd ever been to sea? And s'pose I have? I hain't worried peo-

ple to death about it and broke up another man's business. There ain't a thing in this. This ain't out at sea, ye know!"

The landlord seemed to have the peculiar feeling that only ghosts that sailed or walked the briny deep were worthy of consideration.

"Explain it, then!" Merriwell demanded. "You can make us feel that nothing strange happened last night if you will explain the thing."

"You was just dopy!" the captain argued. "Your nerves was shook up from bein' in the water so long, and the skeer of the collision."

Though there seemed no use to make an investigation, Merriwell began one immediately. He felt sure that Barney Mulloy was somewhere in Glen Springs.

"I know that I saw him!" was his persistent declaration.

"And heard him walk!" added Hodge. "I can swear to it."

"Yes. And though the thing is so strange, it makes me feel better, for I am sure now that Barney is not dead."

"But he looked like a ghost!" Bart admitted. "I'm with you, though, to the end in this thing. We'll go to the bottom of it."

Questioning the people of the village yielded no better results. Everybody agreed that no person answering to the description of Barney Mulloy had been in Glen Springs. Some of them were even more nervous and indignant than the landlord, for almost the sole remunerative business of these people was the keeping of summer boarders, and they feared that grawsome reports about the place would drive guests away.

"Mr. Hodge and I are coming back here to-night," Merriwell said to the landlord. "Perhaps we shall bring some of these friends with us. It seems useless to continue the investigation now, and I want, besides, to ask some questions at Sea Cove. The launch is all ready to return to Sandy Hook, and the officer in command says that his orders require him to return there without further delay. But we will come back to-night."

The landlord's face did not give the proposition an eager welcome, though one of his business tenets was never to turn a guest away.

So the launch steamed away to Sandy Hook, leaving Glen Springs and its strange and unsolved puzzle behind.

CHAPTER XII. AT SANDY HOOK.

But for that seemingly impenetrable mystery, the trip to Sandy Hook, with the visit of inspection which followed, would have been jolly. However, there was so much to be happy and thankful for, anyway, that the spirits of the party partook largely of the brightness of the day.

The run of the speedy launch up the coast was pleasant, and at Sandy Hook they found their fellow students awaiting them, and were given a right royal welcome by Captain Isaac Heath, the officer in charge of the proving grounds.

"Say, fellows, this is great!" Danny warbled, as Captain Heath escorted them to where the big guns were. "I always did like big guns!"

"You're such a big gun yourself!" sneered Bink, under his breath.

"Binky, if my brain caliber required no more than a number five hat, as yours does, I'd sing low about big guns!"

"Number five hat? Why—"

"This ten-inch breech-loading rifle takes a charge of 110 pounds of Dupont smokeless powder and a projectile weighing 575 pounds," Captain Heath was explaining, as they stopped in front of the big sea-coast defender.

"Say, they're going to fire it!" Bink gasped.

"Of course, you idiot! Did you think it was going to fire them?"

"Better stand on your tiptoes and stick cotton into your ears," Browning warned, as the big gun was quickly made ready for hurling its terrible projectile.

"Wh-what if the dinged old thing should bub-bub-burst?" Gamp anxiously asked.

"We should have to

"Ask of the winds, that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!" "

was Danny's comforting answer.

Dismal and Rattleton retreated a step or two, as did Elsie Bellwood. But Inza stood her ground as bravely as Merriwell himself.

Then, before more could be said, the big cannon boomed forth its volume of deafening sound, making the very walls shake.

Danny tumbled backward, then picked himself up and felt over his person very carefully.

"Am I all here?" he anxiously queried.

All watched the direction in which the huge shot had been fired, but it fell miles away. Merriwell and a few others provided with strong glasses saw it drop into the sea.

The captain was talking again.

"The instruments record an initial velocity of 1,000 feet per second, with a pressure of 24,000 pounds."

"I've been under greater pressure than that," Danny chirped.

"When you were shot?" Bink asked.
"All guns, big and little, are under pressure when they are shot."

"I'll put your throat under pressure when we get away from here!" Bink threatened.

"This is a twelve-inch rifle, loaded with 130 pounds of powder and a projectile of the same weight as the first."

The party had moved to a new point, and Captain Heath was again talking.

Other guns were fired, after the discharge of this one; the last shot being sent from a twelve-inch rifle with a charge of 475 pounds of Dupont brown prismatic powder and a projectile weighing 1,000 pounds.

The roar, the jar and the vibration were like that of a miniature earthquake.

Captain Heath's calm voice was heard again, after a short silence.

"The velocity was 2,088 feet per second, and the pressure 4,000 pounds. This pressure is 10,000 pounds too high. The powder is too quick and will be condemned."

After this there was an examination of the guns and carriages, with a lecture by Lieutenant Bell; an examination of the gun lift battery and the hydraulic lifts, and the wonderful Buffington-Crozier disappearing carriages, and a look over the site of the new artillery post to be known as Fort Hancock. Then luncheon was served.

In spite of the many interesting things which he had seen and to which he had

listened, Merriwell could not get his thoughts away from Barney Mulloy. He had already obtained consent for the party to be taken on the launch to Sea Cove and Glen Springs at once, after luncheon.

Thinking of these things and with his head full of the plans for discovering the secret of the happenings at Glen Springs, he walked round the works again, viewing the emplacements and the big guns, but with his thoughts far enough away from the things on which his eyes rested.

Suddenly he was attracted by a cry. It seemed to come from the air, and it made him think of the apparition and the ghostly footsteps.

But when he glanced up he saw Danny Griswold's head protruding from the muzzle of a large coast defense cannon. Merriwell was astonished, though such a piece of recklessness was just like Danny. It was not that Frank feared any peril to Danny from the gun, but the officers and gunners would be indignant, no doubt, if they caught the little joker playing hide-and-seek in that way with one of their pets.

"I'll give him a scare," he thought. "He is getting altogether too fresh."

"Danny Griswold, that gun is loaded and they are going to fire it!" Merry cried, with well simulated fear.

Danny's red head came further out like the head of a tortoise issuing from its shell.

"Then I suppose I shall be able to get out of here!" Danny chirped. "I can't do it, unless I am shot out. I slipped in here easy enough, but I've grown, I guess, for I can't slip back."

"How did you get in there, anyway?"
"Climbed in."

"I'm afraid you will have to climb out."

A gunner came hurrying upon the scene.

"Wh-what?" he sputtered.

"Our little friend is in need of assistance. If he gets out of there he will never play canon ball again."

"If you will just fire me!" Danny begged, not a bit abashed.

The gunner was not at all willing that Danny's plight should be discovered by an officer, so he quickly went to Danny's

assistance and "fired" him by bodily pulling him out of the cannon.

"Thanks!" chirped the little joker, as he dropped to the ground. "Bink says that I'm a small caliber projectile, but I was quite big enough for that cannon. Say, do you fire men every day?"

The gunner could not suppress a grin.

"Men? Well, you're likely to get fired, young feller, if you monkey round these guns!" he declared.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERY CLEARED AWAY.

What news was obtainable at Sea Cove about Barney Mulloy was important, though somewhat unsatisfactory. Barney had been attacked by tramps and badly hurt, but not killed, though at first the report of his death had gone out. One of the tramps had been nearly killed in the fight, and Mulloy had disappeared.

"What became of him? Where did he go?" were Merriwell's questions.

"We didn't pay much attention to it," was the answer given by Merriwell's Sea Cove informant. "Likely he walked off, or went away on the boat or train. Easy enough to get out of this place."

With this meager information, Frank and his friends hurried back on the launch to Glen Springs.

"He isn't dead!" was Merry's cheerful declaration. "That must have been Barney that Bart and I saw."

"But the walking?" Hodge dubiously questioned.

"And why should he be in hiding?" Diamond demanded.

"Some men love darkness because their deeds are evil," Dismal droned.

"Well, you may be sure that Barney's deeds were not evil," said Frank. "Barney is straight, and true blue."

Night was at hand when the launch cast anchor in the shallow harbor in front of Glen Springs and sent a boat ashore with Merry and the friends he had chosen for the vigil of the coming hours of darkness.

The landlord of the little hotel was not pleased that they had returned for the purpose of capturing the "ghost," though he was beginning, as he confessed, to feel "creepy" about it himself.

"I was intendin' to set up and watch for it, if you hadn't come," he finally admitted.

No one answering to Barney's description had been seen in Glen Springs through the day. In fact, no stranger whatever had been seen in the place from the time the launch went away until it returned.

"It's mighty curious," Bart grimly observed.

"I have a feeling that we will learn tonight just what it is," said Merriwell.

Frank occupied his old room, and sat at the window with Hodge, while Diamond, Rattleton and Bruce remained in the office. The doors leading to the corridor were at first closed.

Merry looked at his watch after the lights were put out in the part of the building occupied by the landlord and his family.

"It ought to be coming round again pretty soon," Bart remarked, finding it impossible to escape a queer, uneasy feeling, anxious as he was to see the spectre, and determined as he was to effect its capture if it again appeared.

As he said it, the sounds of those mysterious steps were again heard in the corridor, and they heard the occupants of the office fling open the door.

"You weren't walking in here?" Diamond demanded.

"Not on your life!" Bart answered.

"But we heard some one!"

"Of course you did, and so did we. And we heard it last night!"

Rattleton and Bruce came on through into Merriwell's room.

"Scrate Gott, this is enotigh to turn a man's hair white!" Rattleton sputtered.

"Did you think we were just jollying you about this?" Bart sharply asked.

"No, but—"

"You're likely to see the thing, as well as hear it," Hodge asserted.

The landlord, who had not retired, though making a pretence of so doing, tumbled down in much excitement, in response to Rattleton's summons.

"Did you see it, boys?" he gasped.

His face was white and he was trembling. All the assumed bravery had gone out of him.

"Only heard it walking there in the hall," Merry answered.

The landlord gave a jump. He had forgotten that he was standing by the corridor door.

"Oh, you can't see anything!" Frank reminded. "That's the trouble. We can hear the thing walking, but we can't see anything. Close the door and we may be able to hear it again."

"Don't! don't!" the landlord pleaded.

"But I want you to hear it. Perhaps you can tell us what it is."

"There is never anything in the corridor," the landlord declared. "I can't set here if you shut that door."

"There he is again!" said Hodge, in the voice of one who expects to behold the supernatural and inexplicable and has steeled himself against unpleasant sensations. "There he comes! Barney, as sure as guns!"

The landlord dropped limply into a chair, and stared out through the open window in the direction indicated by Hodge's pointing finger.

The others grouped round Merriwell and Bart.

"You see it?" Frank whispered.

"Let me out of this!" the landlord gurgled, though no hand was restraining him. "Booh-h-h! Let me out of this. Ar-r-r-r-r! It's a ghost sure enough! Don't you see that white cloth on its head —a bloody white cloth?"

He seemed about to tumble over in a fit.

"He's coming this way!" Merry whispered. "Just keep still now, all of you!"

Rattleton seemed about to bolt from the place, though the others were bravely standing their ground.

"No ghost there!" said Browning. "That's a live man."

"It's Barney," Merry declared. "He is not dead. His head is tied up."

"But what makes the—he sneak along in that way?" Rattleton gasped. "Whegiz, it makes my blood run cold! Ugh!"

"Just keep still and we shall soon find out!" Frank sharply commanded, in a whisper.

The ghostly figure came slowly up the walk. Nearer and nearer it drew, walking as if it did not fear discovery at that late hour.

"There is another!" Rattleton whispered.

The figure of a woman came into view, hurrying rapidly along the path after Mulloy, and seeming to be in pursuit of him, though he appeared not to know it.

"Now!" Merry whispered. "Ready, Hodge—now!"

He leaped through the window, with Bart at his side. The ghostly figure was but a few yards away. Before it could turn in the direction of the sound they were half way across the intervening space.

"Barney! Mulloy!" Frank called.

The figure uttered a cry and started to run.

But Frank's pace was too swift. Almost in the next instant his hand fell on the shoulder of the spectre.

"Don't you know me, Barney? I'm Merriwell!"

The figure ceased its struggles.

"Hurroo! Is it yez for thtrue, Merriwell? I t'ought it wor an officer thryin' to arrist me."

"Break loose and run, ye fool!" was squealed ir: a high, feminine voice. "Run, Barney, dear—run!"

"Niver!" Barney declared. "Niver will I run from a frind loike Merriwell!"

"But you'll be put in jail! You'll be hung!" the woman shrieked, in a vain effort to stampede the Irish lad. "Them fellers is officers."

Bart had pushed up, so that Mulloy could recognize him.

"Save me frum her, Frankie!" Barney pleaded. "Woo-oo! Begorra! She's crazier than wildcats!"

Then he whispered:

"The ould sinner wants to marry me. Think av that! She's been hoidin' me frum the officers fer matrimonial poor-puses. Take me away from her, Franky darlint! Oi've kilt a thramp, and I'm in peril av bein' hoong for it; but I'd rather be hoong than to marry such a cat as that! Bad cess to her!"

"Gentlemen, the poor fellow is out of his head!" the woman purred, modulating that shrieking voice. "His head has been hurt, and he don't know nothin' that he's talkin' 'bout."

Barney clung to Merriwell and Hodge as if he feared the woman would drag him bodily away from these friends.

"Oi suppose thot she may be able to fource me into marryin' her," he moaned. "Oi kilt a thramp, and Oi wor hidin' frum the officers—may the devil floy away wid thim—and Oi sneaked intil her house, d'ye moind, and hid me loike a fool under her bed. The crayther had been lookin' under that bed for forty years to foind a man! And whin she let her ould oyes loight on me, she pulled me out av there; an' she's been kapin' me and scar-in' me intil fits and hoidin' me from the officers iver since—and, bad cess to her nixt wake, she wor goin' to marry me."

"Why did you sneak round the hotel and along the paths in that queer way?" Frank asked, after the vinegary-visaged and matrimonially inclined female had departed in despair and disgust, and he had Barney alone. "That still puzzles me. We heard that you had been killed by those tramps, and you looked and acted enough like a ghost to be one!"

"A ghost, is it?" said Barney, glancing about as if he did not like even the thought. "Thot ould witch wor kapin' me hid away from the officers in that wee bit av a house roight behind the threes over there, and all the ixercoise Oi could git wor whin Oi could shlip out av noights and walk round and swally a brith av fresh air. Oi t'ought Oi had kilt the thramp and thot the officers wor watchin' for me! Thot ould devil hilped me to believe thot hersilf! So whin Oi heard yez call, av coarse Oi worn't goin' to sthop and be arristed. A ghost, is it? Oi'm thinkin' thot yez'd be crapin' round, too, if yez t'ought thot a rope wor riddy to toighten about the neck av yez!"

. "Haw! haw! haw!"

The roars did not proceed from Joe Gamp, but from the landlord of the hotel. Now that Barney was found to be real flesh and blood, and not a spirit, the landlord had entered more heartily into the search for the mysterious source of the strange footsteps.

He had been willing that the doors opening into the corridor should be closed—for only when the corridor was darkened could the ghostly sounds be heard.

As soon as the "footsteps" came again, he threw open the door and chucklingly led the way out through a side room into

a shed-like structure that came up against the corridor wall.

"There is your ha'nt!" he roared, pointing down into a pen in the shed. "There is your ha'nt! A gol-derned old sea turtle! Haw! haw! haw! Ho! ho! ho! He! he! he!"

The turtle was a monster in size.

"But—I don't see!" said Merriwell. "This doesn't explain."

The landlord hopped into the pen and flipped the huge turtle over on its back against the wall. Thereupon it began to kick out with its great flippers, striking them against the corridor wall and making the sounds which had seemed to be footsteps.

Merriwell looked round.

"Oh, yes, I see!" he admitted. "The light from the lighted corridor came through that transom."

"Jest so!" said the landlord. "Whenever your light shined in here it scart the turtle, and it quit kickin'. It's always trying to climb out of the pen and falling over on its back; and when it tips over near the wall and strikes with them flippers, it makes that sound. If it ain't near the wall, of course it don't strike nothin' to make that sound. And of course soon's it can turn itself back—which it can't sometimes for hours—it quits kickin' out."

"And yez tuk me for thot thing and thot thing for me, and aitch av us knew nothing about it, and it wasn't ayther av us!" chuckled Barney.

"Just so!" said Merriwell. "And right glad I am to understand it, and to know that you are living!"

"And Oi niver wor gladder to see anybody in my loife! The soight av yez makes me well. And Bart, me jewel! Yez are as foine a laddie as iver lived! Give me the touch av yer hand ag'in!"

THE END.

The next number (217) of the TIP TOP WEEKLY will contain "Frank Merriwell's Pull; or, True and Tried."

Correspondence.

H. A. W., Detroit, Mich.—No premium.

J. H. B., Middletown, Conn.—No premium.

F. E. J., South Kaukauna, Wis.—No premium.

H. M., Hazleton, Pa.—No premium on either coin.

J. J. McC.—There is no such recipe that we know of.

C. B., Chicago, Ill.—No premium on any of the coins.

W. E. H., Newport, N. H.—Thank you, but the idea would not be feasible at present.

Y. C. K., New York City.—We have no knowledge of the advertisement in question.

J. A. W., Great Falls, Mont.—The two-cent piece of 1864 is worth only its face value.

C. E. W., Dayton, Ohio.—We are sorry, but it is against our rule to give private addresses.

O. G., Pawtucket, R. I.—There are road guides published which will give you all information.

Constant Reader, Danville, Ky.—1. No premium on any of the coins. 2. The J. W. Scott Co., 40 John street, New York City.

W. W., New York City.—By all means follow your father's wishes. You would be more than foolish to do anything else. The theatrical business is a very precarious one.

H. H., Oakesdale, Wash.—The quarter of 1853, without rays back of the eagle, is worth ten dollars. Those with rays are very common. No premium of the quarter of 1854 or the dime of 1853.

Rattles, New York City.—1. Simply moisten the tips of the fingers. Tunes can be played on glasses filled with varying degrees of water by means of little wooden hammers. 2. We will consider the idea.

Jack Smith, Providence, R. I.—Before retiring, take a large pair of old gloves, and spread mutton tallow inside, also all over the hands. Wear the gloves all night, and wash the hands with olive oil and white castile soap the next morning.

E. P., Menominee, Mich.—1. There are premiums on the dimes of the following dates: 1796, 1797, 1798, 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1822, 1828, 1844 and 1846. 2. Send us a pencil rubbing of the coin, and we will try to determine for you what it is.

Inquisitive, St. Joseph, Mo.—The boomerang consists of a piece of hard wood of a bent form, with the curve of a parabola. It is about 2 feet long, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, and is rounded at the extremities; one side is flat, and the other convex, and it is brought to a bluntnish edge. It is discharged by the hand by one end, the convex edge being forward and the flat side upward, and it is thrown as if to hit an object in advance. Instead, however, of going forward, it ascends into the air with a rapid rotatory motion until it reaches a considerable height, when it begins to retrograde, and finally passes over the head of the projector, and falls to the ground behind him. This singular motion is produced by the air impinging on the bulged side of the instrument. The boomerang, the invention of which would have done honor to the most celebrated man of science, has long been a common weapon for war, sport, and the chase among the lowest races of savages upon the earth.

P. O. D., Medford, Mass., and others.—There has been considerable discussion as to the beginning of the twentieth century. We think the following little conversation will explain the matter to you clearly:

Question—What is a year?

Answer—Three hundred and sixty-five days.

What is a century?

One hundred years.

When did the year No. 1 end?

December 31 of the year 1.

When did the year No. 2 begin?

January 1 of the year 2.

When did the year 99 end?

December 31, A. D. 99.

Did that complete a century?

No.

When was the century completed?

At the close of the year following 99, or at the close of the year 100.

When did the second century begin?

January 1 of the year 1 of the second century; that is, January 1, A. D. 101.

When did the nineteenth century end?

At the close of the nineteen hundredth year, or at the close of 1900.

When does the twentieth century begin?

It begins on day No. 1 of the year No. 1 of the twentieth hundred years—that is, on January 1, A. D. 1901.

TIP TOP WEEKLY.

"AN IDEAL PUBLICATION FOR THE AMERICAN YOUTH"

NEW YORK, JUNE 2, 1900.

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STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
238 William St., New York City.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

We desire to congratulate our readers on the capital letters which they have been so kind as to write us, but the length of some has resulted in the crowding out of others. Now, as we desire earnestly to do justice to all, we request our friends to limit their communications to two hundred words. In this way, more letters can be printed each week, and we feel sure all will be better satisfied.

APPLAUSE.

I thought I would write and tell you how much my sister and I appreciate the finest publication in the world—the Tip Top. I hope Frank will go out West and meet Kent Karson. With best wishes to author and publishers,

EVERETTE OVERMAN,
Des Moines, Iowa.

Best wishes for yourself and your sister.

I am pleased to say that I have read Tip Top Weekly, and I cannot be too profuse in my compliments. It is, as its name announces, a tip top book. I think Bart Hodge is a fine character, and Harry Rattleton. I really do hope Frank will meet some of his railroad friends. I buy a Tip Top library, and as soon as anybody sees the picture you can hear exclamations on all sides, such as "After you," "Oh, that must be fine!" etc. Sending my best regards to Mr. Standish.

RICHARD KANE,
Rock Hill College, Md.

We are pleased that the Tip Top is so popular at your college. Regards to yourself and your friends.

I have read a great number of Tip Tops and I think they are very fine. Hodge Bart, I mean Bart Hodge, is Frank's best friend, if he is quick tempered.

W. F. TALBOT,
Santa Monica, Cal.

Thank you.

As I have not seen any letters in your Applause column from Tarboro, and thinking that a letter from a constant reader at that place would be appreciated by you, I will write to you and express my opinion of your Tip Top Weekly. I think it is one of the finest weeklies published and well deserves the reputation it has won. Mr. Standish is an able writer and a favorite with the American youth. I have read Tip Top from No. 96, and have always found them full of the right kind of reading for both boys and girls, men and women. Frank Merriwell is such an honest and straightforward character, not given to boasting that all readers like him. Will Jack Diamond ever meet Miss Reynolds again? I am very anxious to hear more of her. Wishing Tip Top all success, and Mr. Standish a long and prosperous life,

S. LEON PEAL,
Tarboro, N. C.

Glad you think so highly of the Tip Top. Jack will probably meet Juliet Reynolds again.

I have read Tip Top Weekly from No. 56 on up and think it is the best book for boys that is printed. I am a great admirer of Frank and all his friends, and Yale is my favorite college. I think it does boys good to read Tip Top, for Frank is such a good example for all the boys growing up now. My little brother does not like to read much, but since we have been taking Tip Top he has been reading them like everything and seems to enjoy them. I hope that Tip Top will always remain successful.

CECIL FOX,
Bovina, Miss.

The boys can learn nothing but good from Frank. We are pleased to know that your little brother enjoys the Tip Top.

I have been a long time a silent admirer of the great and glorious Tip Top Weekly. I hope Frank will be as noble and brave and true as he has always been. I hope Bart Hodge will marry Grace Vernon and Buck Badger Winnie Lee. Your Comrades is second after Tip Top.

ARTHUR KENYON,
Cooper, Tex.

Frank is not likely to do anything very much out of the way. Comrades has won a host of warm friends.

Having read all the Tip Tops from 150 to the present, and many of the back numbers, I thought I would write and let you know how much I appreciate them. I think Frank Merriwell is a character that all American boys should try to follow. "True as steel, from head to heel." Next to Frank, I like Rattleton and Browning. Hodge is a little too hot-headed, although he is a true friend to Frank. I should also like to see Badger become Frank's friend. As to the girls, I should like to hear Bart finish his love story to Miss Vernon, while Jack Diamond should marry the girl in England. Badger should marry Winnie Lee. You must excuse the following verses, as they are my first attempt at poetry:

Frank Merriwell is a hero,
And fit to be a knight;
For when he is in battle
I tell you he can fight.

But always to the needy,
He lends a helping hand,
And that, sir, is the reason,
That he always heads the band.

JULIUS H. LUX,
Waco, Ohio.

Time only can tell as to who the boys will marry.
Your verses are very creditable.

We write these few lines to let you know what we think of the king of boys' weeklies—Tip Top. It is undoubtedly the best book that was ever written for young America. Merriwell is our hero and model. Buck Badger comes next, Bruce is all right. We think Hodge is a little bit of a cad. We think Badger ought to take Bart's place in Merriwell's flock. Hurrah for Frank, Elsie, Buck, Bruce, Harry Rattleton, Danny Bink and Jack Ready. Long life to the Tip Top.

WE THREE,
Moundsville, W. Va.

Thank you. Regards to you all.

Although I see a number of letters from here, we must remember that Chicago is a very large city and has thousands of readers of your highly moral and instructive weekly, Tip Top. Frank Merriwell is the ideal American boy, and one to be imitated by all boys. We have a club of twenty-three members called the Frank Merriwell Bowling and Literary Club, and I, as secretary, was appointed to write this letter of our approval. Three of our club graduated last year, and the most of us do the same this year. We all earnestly hope to see this letter and our names in the Tip Top. Thanking you for the pleasure that Tip Top gives us, we remain your true friends.

JOE WALSH, Pres.	FRANK KIRBY, Secy.
WILL BARTON, Vice-Pres.	AMSA ARNOLD.
GEORGE AMES, Treas.	FRANK BAKER.
ADAM BREIT.	CLINTON WILSON.
JOHN MURPHY.	CHARLIE WHORTON.
THOS. HENDERSON.	EDMUND ELLIS
SEVER HANSON.	ELMER M'INTIRE,
MIKE KEARNEY.	BERT PERRY.
WM. EVANS.	HARRY CHAPMAN.
BEN. MOLLOHAN.	CARL JOHNSON.
PETE MUNSON.	JIM POWELL.
ALLEN DAVIS.	

Chicago, Ill.

We send you all kindest regards and hope your club will always be on the top notch of prosperity.

In No. 203 the Buck Badger Club says that Bart Hodge should be ostracised from Frank's flock, and Badger to take his place. Bart Hodge will always belong to Frank's flock and always his friend. Bart is queer sometimes, but is a good fellow at heart. Badger might become a friend of Frank, but I doubt it just at present. Best wishes to Frank and his friends.

A CLEVELAND ADMIRER,

Cleveland, Ohio.

Best wishes for yourself. See Correspondence Column.

I have been a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly for over two years, and I think it is the best and most interesting weekly published. Mother would not let me read them at first, but I got her to read two or three numbers, and she does not refuse any longer. I would like for Badger and Frank to become warm friends. Will Bart meet Grace Vernon again? Wishing success to the Tip Top and long life to Mr. Standish, I remain a reader of Tip Top, Do and Dare, and Comrades.

FRANK SMITH,
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Your mother's experience has been that of many parents. Bart may meet Grace again, but it is impossible to predict accurately. See correspondence column.

After having read the Tip Top Weekly from No. 13 to present number (207), with the exception of a few numbers, I decided to write a few words in praise of the Tip Top. It is the best paper that I have ever read. It is interesting and instructive, and the hero, Frank Merriwell, is—well, he is a hero! I think every boy would do well to imitate Frank Merriwell's example. He is such a beautiful character that I never tire of reading about him. Of all of Frank's friends, I like Bart Hodge best; next, Barney Mulroy, Ephraim Gallup, Harry Rattleton, Jack Diamond, Bruce Browning, and so on. All of Frank's friends are fine characters. I think Buck Badger is splendid, and I hope he and Frank will finally come to be friends. Now, I wish to thank Mr. Burt L. Standish for giving to the young Americans such a literary treat as the Frank Merriwell stories. Nothing can excell them. Mr. Standish is at the head of his class in that style of literature. May the Merriwell stories continue always. Hurrah for Frank Merriwell, the chief of athletes, and for Burt L. Standish, chief of authors, and for Street & Smith, the leading publishers of America! May they live long and prosper is the hearty wish of

J. A. SWEANEY,
Arlington, Tex.

All extend their best wishes in return.

I had a habit of smoking about seven or eight cigars a day; I also had the ruinous one of drinking. One day while walking along General Pervetta avenue I picked up what looked at first to be a scrap of paper, but on opening it, to my surprise, I found it to be No. 196 of your Tip Top Weekly. It was entitled "Frank Merriwell Tested; or, A Doubtful Honor." I read it and found it was just what I wanted. I have read all the back numbers, and have just joined a non-smoking club. We call it the Tip Top non-smoking club. With regards to Frank Merriwell and to all the rest of them!

LOUIS M. HEILBRON,
San Francisco, Cal.

Persevere in your good resolutions. Regards to all members of the club.

I read the Tip Top every week,
And better reading I never try to seek.
The stories are both good and grand—
The best that were ever put on the stand.

No other book can take its place—
To compare it to them is but a disgrace;
A better hero we can nowhere find—
So noble a character, so pure a mind.

No matter what he says or does,
It is sure to be for some right cause;
May Frank and his friends live many happy years,
And for them all we'll give three cheers!

As publishers, Street & Smith are great—
There are not many like them in any State;
Standish is the best author in the land—
I wish that I could shake his hand.

JACK GREENBERG,
Grand Forks, N. D.

Mr. Standish wishes so, too. Thank you.

I have just finished reading No. 211, and have read very near all of the back numbers, and they are just O. K. Next to Frank of the boys I like Harry Rattleton, and I like Bart very much. I would like to see Buck Badger become Frank's friend, and I hope Bart will stick to Frank just the same. I think Bart is true blue every time. Long live Tip Top and Mr. Standish.

CHAS. H. CRANDELL,
Wickford, R. I.

Frank's friends are certainly a very interesting lot. We agree with you in thinking that Bart is true blue.

Having read the Tip Tops from No. 1 to the present number, our club moved that we send our congratulations to all connected with the Tip Top for publishing an "Ideal Publication for the American Youth." Our club is called the "Merry Boys" or "The Never Say Die Club." There are thirty-eight members, and we are building a gymnasium, and in order to pay for it the members pay 50 cents per month dues.

HARRY HUFF, Pres. ROY CRANE, Sec.
WARREN MASSEY, V-P. LOUIS SCHNEIDER, Treas.
Pasadena, Cal

We congratulate your club on its success, which we sincerely hope will always continue.

Do you care to receive a letter from one of the older readers of Tip Top? I am way up here in the Capital City of the "Old Granite State," the home of the great Daniel Webster. Although he never made his home in this city, yet it was only a little distance from here that he was born, so we can almost claim him. He was among the orators of our country what the Tip Top is among the boys' publications of to-day—the greatest. First I must tell you how much pleasure my mother used to take in reading these stories. She was sick with consumption for over a year and passed away almost a year ago. She and I talked over the stories many times, and I know they helped her pass away many a weary moment while waiting for the end. I am older than most of the readers, so we could see and appreciate many things in the stories they cannot. I know something of life, I have seen both the good and the bad, and I know something of temptation, so it is good to see a story that always makes it a point to make boys love healthy sports and kindness and the things that make a fellow manly. I want to put in my vote for Harry Rattleton as the very best friend of Frank. Frank has many and good friends in all the others; but the fellow with no accomplishments, nothing remarkable about him, except his eagerness which tangled his tongue—he was the chum for me. Do you remember when he thought Frank was killed at the tunnel? That settled this question for me, once and for all. I want to speak for little Elsie, too. Don't you know the strong need the weak? Who could make sunshine in life for Frank like Elsie? He needs some one to depend on him to make him happy. His is a nature made for that. Let Bart have Inza. Inza, the strong, self-possessed. She can bring the noble out of a fellow like Bart. With a strong nature like hers to guide him, Bart can be the man that lies deep in his soul. Bart is like the horse that is full of life and vigor. Put a strong hand behind that horse and he feels it, he knows that there is the one to guide him to victory. I cannot find the words to make you see this as I see it. Frank could not live without some one like Elsie—tender, dependent and looking to him for help. Here is a motto which is a favorite of mine, and one that it seems to me Merry must have seen and is trying to live it: "Thou must be that which thou oughtest to be, and unless thou art that, thou shalt be nothing." If the fellows ever can't find a place to go on a vacation, send them to Concord, and I will take them personally to the home of Webster in Franklin, his birthplace in Salisbury, and show them his statue in the State House grounds here. We will go to Lake Winnipiseogee—"The Smile of the Great Spirit"—and up through the White Mountains. I am proud of the "Old Granite State," for though small, she has left her mark in history, and, best of all, to me, "That's where I live." Best wishes to Tip Top, from

"CONCORD,"
Concord, N. H.

Your letter is extremely interesting, and we feel sure that the fellows would be delighted to accept your kind invitation and visit Concord. We are more glad than we can say that the Tip Top proved of any comfort to your mother. The motto you quote is an excellent one.

In the Applause column of the Tip Top I have read arguments in favor of Elsie or Inza's marriage to Frank Merriwell. But I think the best way to settle the question is to let Frank choose; he is the only one that knows which he likes best. Of the two girls I have no favorite, because I think they are both model girls, and that Frank is not going to have much of a snap in choosing. Winnie Lee, I think, is well off where she is; with such a friend as Buck Badger she has a friend, though peculiar in his likes and dislikes, who is as good a friend as any girl should want. There is only one thing about Badger that I do not like, and that is his aversion to Merriwell; in that he is wrong, but you can't expect everybody to be perfect. Though a foe he is an honorable enemy, which he proved in No. 210 of Tip Top. In friends, Frank has those that he has reason to be proud of. I guess this is enough for this time, so good-by, and may success ever be with Tip Top and its publishers.

G. W. H. M.,
Sacramento, Cal.

You are right in what you say about the two girls. They both have splendid qualities. It looks as if Badger were going to prove himself worthy of Winnie, and he is certainly getting over his obstinate and unjust aversion to Frank.

I want to say a few words for Bart Hodge. I see there are a number of readers that would like to have Mr. Standish have Merry drop him and take up Buck Badger. I don't see what fault they have to find with Bart. He may have his faults, but who is there that hasn't? At heart you will find him a fine fellow, always ready to stand up for Merry and to fight if necessary. I would like to have Frank revisit Fardale.

OWEN WILLAHAN,
Titusville, Fla.

Bart, in spite of his faults, seems to be greatly liked, and we think he deserves it. Perhaps Frank will revisit Fardale some day.

Allow me to thank you for the many pleasant hours I spent in reading the Tip Top Weekly. I have read all of them except No. 5, and am trying to get that. Wishing Frank and his friends a long and prosperous life,

HUNTER SHERAR,
Rockdale, Tex.

Thank you.

I have read the Tip Top Weeklies from first to last, missing only a few of the late ones on account of the many movements of the command to which I belong and the great distance which separates us. I have also been much interested in the many expressions of praise and opinion printed in the Applause column. To me the stories and the characters of the stories seem most interesting and praiseworthy. In my opinion Frank's partner for married life should be Elsie, but may that time be long in coming if it brings a change in the stories. Hodge is an excellent character, and may he become friendly with Badger, who is a native of my home State. I hope you will print this word from a new and distant land and written by a true friend.

ROYAL A. STREETER,
Co. A, 32d Inf. Vols., Mariveles,
Philippine Islands, U. S. A.

It is with the greatest pleasure that we have received your letter, and we are only too glad to print it. We prize most highly words of praise from our gallant soldier boys.

Having read the Tip Top from the Fardale series to the present, I thought I would pass my opinion. There is no reading in the world so good. Interesting as well as moral. Next to Frank I like Jack Diamond. Hodge is all right, although I wish he and Badger were better friends. Although I have read many love stories, I never was interested so much in a girl as I have been in Inza Burrage. There is a certain dash about her that I like.

NORMAN R. GATES,
Worcester, Mass.

You are by no means alone in your admiration for Inza.

Being a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly, I thought that it was time that I should write and tell you how I enjoy it. I am always so glad when Friday comes, although I read the Phil Rushington and the Comrades. I do not like the way that Winnie has been carrying on with Badger, as I do not think that he is a fit associate, but he is growing better. Please receive my congratulations.

L. B. E.,
Dorchester, Mass.

Badger has many faults to overcome, but he is doing his best to prove himself worthy of Winnie. Thank you.

I have read Tip Top Weekly from No. 1 up to the present number, and think it indeed "an ideal publication for the American youth." Next to Frank, I admire Jack Diamond. But all of his friends are all right, and I hope that Buck Badger will soon become one of Frank's friends.

C. JEROME,
Anniston, Ala.

Thank you.

I wish to write in answer to the favor (?) asked by the Buck Badger and Winnie Lee clubs, who want Bart removed from the flock, and that braggart, Buck B., put in his place. Let me ask them who it was that sprang in front of Frank and received the bullet meant for him when they were on the road with "John Smith of Montana," and who it was that shot the rope in two with a pistol when Frank was tied to a balloon by the jealous actor, and who it was that in Ace High fought a crowd of desperate men whom he thought had killed Merry? Who was all this but noble Bart Hodge? I think the B. B. and W. Lee clubs have forgotten Fardale and other places. I think Bart is more of a boy than Frank, as Bart has a temper and shows it, while Frank, though cooler, is not as much like the American youth as Bart. Hoping the Winnie and Buck clubs will see this,

A FRIEND OF BART'S,
Meridian, Miss.

Bart would appreciate your defense. You have probably seen by this time how he saved Frank's life in the fire at the peril of his own.

Please accept these few lines as a token of appreciation of the weekly:

How dear to our hearts is the old Tip Top Weekly,
As Mr. Burt Standish presents them anew;

The story, the hero, the friends that stand by him

As every week regular they come into view.

Frank Merriwell, the athlete,

"True as steel" he is always.

Who rescues men from sin and shame,

Frank Merriwell, the hero,

In the famed Tip Top Weekly,

Whose friends to him stick, and his name it is famed.

Then three cheers to the weekly, and also for Merry,

Hodge, Rattleton and Browning come in for their share;
Diamond, Stubbs and Griswold, who'd kick were they left out;

You can bet we will try and treat them all fair.

Jack Ready, the freshman,

The leader of his classmates,

Who for "Old Eli" always will stand,

Buck Badger, the cowboy,

An enemy, but honest,

I would like to see Frank Merriwell's friend.

CECIL CORNELL,
Cleveland, Ohio.

We gladly print your verses, and reciprocate your kindly sentiments.

We have seen a letter from Chas. R. Kenworthy, Wilmington, Del., in answer to our first note. He does not understand our meaning. We are not deciding for Frank, but only expressing our opinion as to which was the more worthy of the girls to be his wife. We do not approve of the voting idea. We do not agree with those who would like to have some of the characters taken from the stories. If there were nothing disagreeable, Mr. Standish's writings would not be true to life; if Bart were to be cut by the "flock" Frank Merriwell would not be true to his friendship. Either of these things is impossible.

T. N. and P. O.,
Boston, Mass.

We willingly print your answer. What you say is very well reasoned.

I would fain get out my little hammer and knock. This Elsie-Inza feud is becoming too serious. I expect the admirers to soon be settling the merits on the field of honor. True, it is the greatest compliment to Mr. Standish's genius in realistic story-telling to see young men and women frantically rushing into print to champion the cause of two characters in fiction. It is a compliment to the fine way in which the author has sustained the interest, has read human nature and has drawn character. Seriously, though, I think the readers go to extremes over the estimable young ladies who live not only in the pages of Tip Top, but in the hearts of their admirers also, and who, if judged fairly, will be found equally worthy and human. And Bart Buckrum. Well, Bart gives me a pang because he has so many counterparts in real life. But he is essential to a Tip Top story, and if Frank can stand him we ought to, though for the life of me I can't see why some readers rank him next to Merry. To those who demand Badger to instantly become Frank's bosom friend, I would say: "Leave the author alone. Badger is the most original character developed yet. As a foe he interests, as a friend he tires. Next to Frank I like Jack Ready. He is O. K., and I notice the author likes him, too, as does Merriwell."

THE GENTLE KNOCKER,
Chicago, Ill.

As you say, the interest taken is certainly a great compliment to Mr. Standish, who has a peculiar knack of making his characters live. We do not all think alike, you know, or care for the same people, and it is well that it is so.

Would like to express my appreciation of your publication, Tip Top Weekly. It is certainly tip top in every way. I think Mr. Standish an author who knows just exactly what an American youth wants. But there is one thing I wish to speak about, and that is some of these discussions as to whom Frank should marry. Mr. Standish has successfully managed the Tip Top for just four years, and I think that when the time should come for Frank to marry, Mr. Standish will fill the bill to a T. I am also a reader of all your other publications. Your new libraries are also very good. Congratulating the Tip Top on its fourth birthday.

A. R.
Milwaukee, Wis.

Thank you for the congratulations on our birthday. The Tip Top was never in better health. Mr. Standish will certainly do his best.

Having read the Tip Top from No. 1 to present date, I think it about time to show my appreciation of this splendid weekly by sending a few lines to the Applause column. It is undoubtedly the best weekly of its kind published. My favorite boy character after Frank is Harry Rattleton, as he was never Frank's enemy, and has always been a true friend. Wishing long life and continued success in the future to Mr. Standish, Street & Smith, and last, but by no means least, Frank Merriwell.

VERNA G. LYNCH,
Pitman Grove, N. J.

We warmly appreciate your high opinion of the Tip Top. Yes. Harry is a good fellow, and one to be trusted.

I have been a constant reader of the Tip Top since its first appearance, but have never before written my sentiments in its praise. There seems to be a good deal of discussion about Elsie and Inza's merits, or their capabilities of making Frank a good wife. It seems to me that a large number are too partisan and do not give the other their just due. Inza is accused of being proud, cold, haughty, passionate, resentful and a flirt. Elsie is soft, a bread and butter miss, a child, etc. Neither seems to be given credit by the admirers of the other. Two girls so different in everything cannot very well be compared. In my opinion each is a true, loving girl, capable of making some man a wife who will indeed "divide his sorrows and double his joys." However, we do not want our ideal to become a married man for a long time yet. Let him wait till he is at least thirty. A young man married is a young man married may not be wholly true, but a man who has arrived at full maturity and acquired experience is certainly better able to undertake the duties of husband and father. Let us hear more of Bart, Bruce, Jack and the rest. May Frank and Badger become true friends, and each learn the value of each other's good qualities, and let us all leave Frank's future to the capable hand of Burt L. Standish.

E. WESLEY,
Dixon, Ill.

Your ideas are most sensible, as we think our readers will acknowledge. Mr. Standish will certainly do his best to influence Frank to choose the right one, when the time comes.

As there are no letters in your columns from this city I thought I would let you know that though you have not heard from us still we appreciate your noble efforts to please the "American youth." I think the characters in your book are just fine; but one thing, I am sorry that Hock Mason is not one of the "Merriwell set." It would please me and the rest of the Pine Bluff boys very much to see him one of the boys. I have written a piece of poetry which I inclose:

"Of all the weeklies I ever read,
The Tip Top Weekly stands ahead;
Its brave young hero is Merriwell,
Of whom Mr. Standish loves to tell
Stories to the young American boy,
Who reads them with an honest joy."

A. J.
Pine Bluff, Ark.

Perhaps Mason will some day join the Merriwell set. Our regards to you and all our friends in Pine Bluff.

Av yez place, Oi w'ud loike to wrote an' let yez kno' that we Texas b'ys air not all hathens, fer we do be affer r'ading; especially whin we foind onything so inturisting as the Tip Top Loibrary. Oi tell yez it's the foolest book av its koind in the whole wurruld. Av yez don't belave it, jist ax inny av the b'ys in this town. Shure, an av all the b'ys in the whole wurruld, Frank Merrywell is the foolest. That Ooirish lad is a daisy, too, shure an' he is thot. Plase excuse this long letter, but Oi saw wan the other day frum a Dutch spalpane, an' Oi thought av yez cud print that wan yez cud print this wan, too. Hopin' Frankie, Burt L. and the publishers will live always, Oi am

AN ADMIRER,
Longview, Tex.

You have caught the Irish brogue admirably. Barney sends regards.

I think the Frank Merriwell stories are the very best that can be produced. I like the stories best when Frank is at Yale. Frank Merriwell is the boys' motto in Walla Walla, and whenever there is a good catch made in baseball or a good tackle made in football, they say it is a Frank Merriwell catch or tackle, as the case may be.

JOHN LEAHY, JR.,
Walla Walla, Wash.

Frank is proud of the compliment paid him by the boys of Walla Walla. Your questions have been answered in the Correspondence column.

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